



Thursday, January 25, 2018

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Driver in serious condition at hospital after crash

LORRY CAREERS INTO A HOUSE

Report by Jamie Brassington

A LORRY driver whose vehicle smashed into the side of a house in Halesowen was in a serious condition in a Birmingham hospital yesterday (Wednesday).

Paramedics found the driver in cardiac arrest on arrival at the scene near the junction of Carters Lane and Royal Oak Road on Monday.

The driver was rushed to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

West Midlands Police said enquiries are continuing into the cause of the crash, which took place around 9.45am. The impact knocked down a brick garden wall but no one was injured in the house.

Witnesses

An air ambulance, two land ambulances and a paramedic officer were called to the scene alongside police and fire crews.

A police spokesman said: "It is my understanding that the man remains in hospital. Enquiries are continuing into how the crash happened."

Witnesses told crew members that it looked like the man had suffered a medical episode at the wheel just before his vehicle ploughed into the front garden of the house.

A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said: "An off-duty fire officer was already performing CPR which ambulance staff took over as well as administering advanced life support."

Further emergency treatment was given as he was conveyed to the QE.

Carters Lane from Bourne Avenue to the Kent Road island was closed for several hours after the accident as the fire service made the scene safe.

West Midlands Police confirmed no one inside the property was injured.

WAR VETERAN, 100, SAW WAY TO STAY ACTIVE



Anyone for a slice? Bernard Colechin with tutor Jim Ault and his daughter Jeanette Colechin at his woodwork class in Halesowen

HE may have just turned 100 but Bernard Colechin is carving out a new path as a keen woodworker.

A former lieutenant commander during the Second World War now Mr Colechin loves nothing better than a spot of whittling at his woodwork class. He was delighted to receive a cake on his 100th decorated with woodwork tools along with his card from the Queen.

Mr Colechin, who lives in Kinver, helped keep the vital port of Dover clear of mines

during the war, after joining the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserves.

His daughter Jeanette Colechin, 68, said: "He was a minesweeper and also swept Hong Kong harbour when that was taken from the Japanese, he made it safe for our ships."

"The job of the minesweepers was to sweep the coast using a sort of drag system that pulled the mines off. He lost a lot of his comrades."

"He was mentioned in dispatches for his

distinguished service, the whole family were and still are very proud."

After the war he worked as a manager at Unilever, which brought him to the Midlands in the 1950s. Now Mr Colechin is perfecting his skills in his woodwork class, which meets at Leasowes High School in Halesowen. He attends every week with his daughter and has been going for 14 years.

Mr Colechin said: "It is a very interesting way of passing the time."

COURT

Three men set to face murder trial

THREE men charged with the murder of 24-year-old Jaskaran Kang are not expected to enter their plea for two months, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The victim was found fatally stabbed at a flat above a convenience store in Stourbridge Road, Dudley, on January 6.

Reggie Salmon, aged 20 from Stourbridge Road, Dudley, and a 17-year-old youth from Newcastle-under-Lyme, who cannot be identified, were remanded in custody by James Burbidge QC on Friday.

Dontay Ellis, 18, from Central Drive, Lower Gornal was remanded by Judge John Wait at the same court on Monday.

ACCIDENT

Bus collision kills pensioner, aged 93

A 93-year-old woman has died after being hit by a bus in Bearwood.

Police have appealed for witnesses to the accident in Poplar Road at 5pm on Monday to call them on 101.

The woman suffered severe head injuries and was pronounced dead at hospital. Police say she is not being identified at this stage but her family have been informed and are being supported by specialist officers.

FATALITY

Death not suspicious after body is found

THE body of a woman found in Halesowen last week has been identified but her name has not yet been released.

Police say they are not treating the death of the woman, who was found in Leasowes Park, as suspicious. The 42-year-old had been discovered at around 11.25am on January 17. A police spokesman said the cause of death was being investigated.

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CHLOE'S CURLS BY TOP STYLIST



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Hawthorns to host service for Cyrille

FUNERAL details and a celebratory service have been announced for Black Country football legend Cyrille Regis.

The star's private family funeral will be held on Tuesday, January 30.

West Bromwich Albion have confirmed The Hawthorns will stage a service to honour Cyrille's life immediately after the funeral. The club said this event will be 'a celebration of his life and career'. It will allow Cyrille's fans to join his family at the stadium.

The service for the Albion, Wolves, Coventry and Villa star will be held in the East Stand. It will be conducted from 11am by Pastor David Carr from the church Cyrille attended, the Renewal Christian Centre in Solihull.

There will be seats for supporters and the public who want to pay their respects to one of the Baggies' all-time greats. The club will announce details of how fans can attend, see their website for details. Otherwise, supporters will have a chance to say their farewells earlier in the day, as Cyrille's funeral cortege will leave The Hawthorns at 8.45am. The club are making plans to accommodate fans who want to salute Cyrille, who died last week aged 59, before the cortege leaves for the private service.

Albion have also confirmed the impromptu 'shrine' at the Astle Gates will remain in place until after the next Premier League home game, against Southampton, for which the club is planning a major tribute to its former England striker.

In a further mark of respect, the stadium flags at The Hawthorns will remain at half-mast until after his funeral. A club statement said: "Julia and Cyrille's children Robert and Michelle have once again asked us to convey the family's huge appreciation for the messages of love and support which continue to flood in from Albion fans and the wider football community."

Colleagues and friends who want to attend the service should email rob.doyle@stellargroup.co.uk

Domestic abuse crime reports up by a fifth

THE number of domestic abuse crimes in the West Midlands rose by almost a fifth in one year, according to a council report.

There were 1,236 domestic abuse crimes between April 1 and September 30 last year - up from 1,061 in the same period in 2016.

A Dudley Council report said the 16 per cent increase in recorded domestic abuse crimes should not 'be viewed negatively' as it means more people are reporting incidents.

However, a Black Country campaigner has disagreed, and said education is key to tackling domestic abuse.

The report for the council's scrutiny committee said: "From April 1, 2017 to September 30, 2017 1,236 domestic abuse crimes have been recorded by West Midlands Police. This compares to 1,061 for the same period in 2016, therefore an increase of 175 recorded crimes.

Awareness

"An increase in recorded crimes is not viewed negatively as a number of campaigns have taken place to increase to raise awareness in respect of domestic violence and abuse, and to encourage reporting."

Samantha Billingham, who runs the Survivors of Domestic Abuse campaign (SODA) in the Black Country, said: "I'm not really sure why there is an increase - there are lots of different reasons why it could be high.

"I would view that as negative definitely and I think something needs to be done early in life. It is all about education."

Samantha, from Brierley Hill, was last week named winner of the Fresh Start award in the Express & Star's Great Big Thank You Awards.

Scrutiny committee member Councillor Karen Jordan added: "I am pleased that people are coming forward and getting help, but on the other hand I am so disappointed that domestic violence is still going on."

Stylist Lee is a cut above the rest



Celebrity hairdresser Lee Stafford works his magic on student Chloe Millard, 18, from Wordsley

HAIR we go! Celebrity hairdresser Lee Stafford visited a college to pass on his skills to hairdressing students during a special master-class.

Fifty students took part in the event at Halesowen College where Lee re-styled the hair of Chloe Millard, from Wordsley.

Mr Stafford showed off the twist-ed-tong technique, which he said took long straight hair and gave it a 'Kate Moss/Sienna Miller look'.

The students then had the chance to see advanced hairdressing skills and ask Mr Stafford a range of questions.

The former Hairdresser of the Year - and Men's Hairdresser of the Year - now has hair academies in nine further education colleges and products which sell in more than 40 countries worldwide.

Sharon Stanton, curriculum team manager for hair and beauty, said: "We were delighted to welcome Lee to Halesowen College.

"During his visit he spoke with students and passed on his skills and experience.

"It was very good of him to give up his time to do the demonstration pass on all his knowledge and expertise to our students."

Mr Stafford won the Men's British Hairdresser of the Year award in 1998 and opened his second salon in Soho, London, two years later.

He was then voted into This Morning's television show as one of their chosen elite stylists.

Crystal clear images help keep crime off the buses

POLICE have praised new CCTV cameras which help officers tackle anti-social behaviour on buses in the Black Country in real time.

Buses in the West Midlands have more CCTV cameras than any other mode of transport, according to National Express. This led a senior police officer to say he is 'staggered' anyone does anything wrong on a bus because the CCTV pictures are so clear.

Detective Inspector Warren Hines of West Midlands Police CID homicide investigation team praised the quality of the CCTV footage used in the case of a fatal stabbing on the number 11 bus in January last year. Kieran Gillespie, aged 26, from Wellesbourne Road, Handsworth, was jailed for life in July for the murder of Leon Barrett-Hazle.

Det Insp Hines said: "Without doubt, the quality of the CCTV footage from the bus solved this case for us. It left the offender no option but to hand himself in once those pictures were published."

National Express West Midlands has multiple CCTV cameras - up to 12 - on every one of its 1,600 buses.

All new buses since 2012 have been fitted with next-generation digital CCTV units which give crystal-clear pictures. West Midlands Safer Travel Partnership has also installed 4G Vemotion CCTV.

Venues to remain closed until 2020

THE Civic Halls in Wolverhampton will stay closed for two years with the major overhaul of the buildings to cost £23 million more than first thought.

It means events booked in for 2018, including the Grand Slam of Darts and top comedians such as Jason Manford and Sarah Millican will not now be held at the famous venues in Wolverhampton.

But while some shows, across the Civic Hall and Wulfrun Hall, may be cancelled council bosses promised the Grand Slam of Darts will be found another home in the city until at least 2020.

City council bosses said people with tickets would be contacted when the situation becomes clear.

Work to revamp the Civic Halls was originally due to cost £14.4 million.

Greyhounds need to find new homes

THE Greyhound Trust has rehomed eight dogs so far this month. Deb Wor-ton, manager at the Dudley-based charity, said: "It would certainly be wonderful if our remaining hounds could find a loving home before the end of the month." Call 07594 474 272.

Jam-buster bid at island could have 2020 start

LONG-AWAITED plans to revamp a notoriously congested roundabout in the Black Country have finally taken a step forward.

But it could still be up to two years before any improvements get under way at busy Birchley Island.

Transport bosses are set to approve a funding bid to launch a scheme aimed at cutting congestion at the roundabout in Oldbury, which is beside junction two of the M5.

The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) say it could be 2020 before any work starts.

Roads chiefs have called for action at the island for years due to the level of congestion faced by drivers on a daily basis.

The LEP said a project review was currently being carried out and when complete detailed designs for the project would follow. It said a 'start on site date' was 'anticipated before 2020'.

Board members are set to approve £150,000 to allow design work to progress but substantial funding for the project has so far proved to be a stumbling block.

Black Country LEP board member Ninder Johal said it was likely the group would wait for the outcome of a feasibility study and find out how much the scheme would cost before making a decision over whether to back it.

Pub is for sale after incident

AN historic Stourbridge pub which was told to tighten security after a customer was attacked has gone up for sale.

The Bell, on the corner of Bell Street and Market Street, is being sold through estate agent Andrew Taplin.

The pub is also a hotel and has shop units that are available to let.

Wollaston and Stourbridge town councillor Steve Clark said: "It is a beautiful old building. I know it has had its problems. Hopefully whoever takes over can refurbish the site and make it a big part of the town."

Dudley Council told bosses that security must be improved, after a man was left nursing serious injuries following an attack in October.

Museum's road

PLANS to build a new 1940s to 60s town at the Black Country Living Museum have moved a step forward after an application was submitted to Dudley Council for a new access road at the Tipton Road site.

Grove hosts match in mascot's honour



Richard Eades, left, and Dave Challenor

BAGGIE Bird Dave Challenor is organising a special match to raise money for the family of his late friend and fellow mascot Richard Eades.

Mascots from all over the country will be at Halesowen Town's ground The Grove on April 29 to feature in the fun match.

There will then be a game between a West Brom All-Stars team led by Andy Johnson and Boing FC, the Albion supporters' team that Eades used to play for.

The father-of-two, who was an Albion mascot for nearly two decades,

died suddenly on Boxing Day, and there were tributes to him at The Hawthorns when Arsenal visited on New Year's Eve.

Albion's players donated money for his family in the immediate aftermath of his death but Challenor wants to raise enough funds so his late colleague's children can enjoy a treat.

"We're raising money for his family because I want them to have a magical year," said Challenor.

"Last year ended so terribly, I want to raise as much money as I can put it into a fund for his kids.

There will also be a nine-a-side tournament featuring teams from all aspects of Richard's life. The mascot game will take place before Johnson's All-Star side take on Boing FC in the main event.

"I think it will be a fitting tribute for him really," said Challenor. "It's been quite nice for me to find out how liked we are. I need to find a big ball, because mascots can't really see well. There's bound to be comedy value.

The event starts at 11am on Sunday, April 29. Ticket prices are yet to be decided.

Council 'not ignoring' concerns over green belt

COUNCIL officers have insisted they are listening to residents concerns over a review of green belt land after they were accused of 'ignoring' them.

Dudley Council is set to press ahead with the review, despite calls for it to be halted by those concerned about more development on the borough's rural fringe, particularly near Halesowen.

The green belt review follows a 10-week public consultation held by the council as part of the Black Country Core Strategy to plan up to 2036 and aims to address a 22,000 shortfall of homes across the region.

But councillors branded the public consultation - which focused on the shortfall of brown-field sites needed to accommodate the 78,000 homes required by 2036 - as not 'robust' enough at an overview and scrutiny committee meeting last week.

Urgent

Councillor Simon Phipps, who represents Belle Vue ward, said: "I personally feel the entire consultation of the Black Country Core Strategy has not been robust enough."

"I would also like to recommend that the board recommends cabinet request an urgent report on the issues and options consultation prior to approving any further work on the Black Country Core Strategy."

The consultation yielded 1,600 formal responses and 300 social media comments.

Speaking at the meeting was Gary Mills, a Halesowen resident, said he felt the process was going ahead 'without listening to the public consultation'.

But Alan Lunt, strategic director, said: "I can absolutely assure you that your comments and your observations during the consultation are not being ignored."

"They will be taken into account along with a great weight and wide range of evidence which we are obliged to collect and collate in order to ensure that we have a sound local plan. If we do not undertake a green belt review then the green belt is at greater risk."



Alexandra Newton-Cox, aged 33, says she will be better prepared for this year's charity walk from London to Brighton but she is dreading the blisters

Alex is prepared to nurse blisters

A NURSE from Halesowen is training in preparation for a 100 kilometre (62 mile) walk from London to Brighton for Blind Veterans UK.

Alexandra Newton-Cox, aged 33, will be attempting the mammoth challenge for the second time, having first taken part last year. Then, despite not training, she managed to walk 87km (54 miles) raising more than £600 for the national charity for blind and vision-impaired ex-service people.

But this year she has decided make sure she is better prepared and is determined to finish.

She said: "You really push your body to the limits. Don't even get me started on the blisters! The good thing is that this year I'll have a friend with me, and the training is well underway."

The walk takes place in July. To support Alexandra's big walk visit justgiving.com/alex-newton-cox1

NEWS IN BRIEF

College open for potential students

AN OPEN day is being held at Halesowen College on Saturday.

The college site in Whittingham Road will be open from 10am to 2pm, offering opportunities to find out about the range of courses offered.

The college had a 98 per cent A-level pass rate last year. It also offers vocational courses, has a university centre delivering HNC/D and foundation degrees and works with local employers to offer training for apprenticeships.

The open day will feature subject tasters, presentations, live music, dance and drama performances and the chance to have a go at competitions and challenges.

Grab your flat cap for Peaky nights

THE 1920s gangster world of Peaky Blinders is coming back to the Black Country Living Museum, following sell-out nights celebrating the Birmingham-based drama.

Fans of the hit TV show will be able to grab their flat cap or flapper dress to walk around the series' film set, as well as enjoying an evening of music and entertainment from the roaring 20s. Revellers will be able to take a stroll around Shelby's yard - where many props used during the filming remain - at the adults-only event on September 7 and 8.

Evacuation after chip shop blaze

RESIDENTS were evacuated following a fire at a fish and chip shop in Rowley Regis. Three fire engines were sent to Portway Fish Bar on Portway Road, Rowley Regis, just before 11.30am on Saturday.

No one was injured but witnesses say several people were led to safety from the premises. It is understood crews evacuated residents from a flat above the premises and an adjoining property. West Midlands Fire Service said: "The fire started in the range cooker and there are no reports of any injuries."

Historic house reopens after £5m renovation

THE official opening of Lightwoods House in Bearwood after its £5 million revamp has taken place.

The Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Ahmadul Haque will open the Grade II-listed building following a major restoration funded by Sandwell Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and BIG Lottery.

Chiefs said the late 18th Century house is now a venue for weddings, events and community groups.



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COUNTY NEWS

Jeff Lynne's ELO in extra Brum date

JEFF Lynne's Electric Light Orchestra will play a third date in their home city of Birmingham.

The band, which formed in the West Midlands back in 1971, is best known for a huge array of hit songs including Mr Blue Sky, Living Thing, Evil Woman, Roll Over Beethoven and Don't Bring Me Down.

The group will now play Arena Birmingham on October 13, as well as October 10 and 12, which had been previously announced. From 1972 to 1986, ELO accumulated 20 top 20 hit singles in the UK chart.

For more information visit www.arenabham.co.uk Tickets start at £57.40.

Nova recruitment jobs are saved

A WEST Midland recruitment and training agency has been bought out of administration.

The sale of Nova Recruitment by Steven Stokes and Raj Mittal, partners with business advisory firm FRP Advisory, has secured the jobs of all 12 staff based at its Castle Street, Dudley, and Birmingham premises. It has been bought by Capital Outsourcing Group.

Nova Recruitment has had steady growth since formation in 1980.

Midlands food awards nominations appeal

THE Midlands Food, Drink and Hospitality Awards is set to be the biggest ever, with Pepsi Max as headline sponsor again. It takes place at Edgbaston cricket stadium on June 25.

The awards will recognise and reward bars, restaurants, cafes and other food firms for first class service. Nominations open until April 23. Visit mfdhwards.co.uk to nominate.

Disgraced GP 'could have abused others'

Report by Annabal Bagdi

IT was a 'horrific' breach of trust that saw shamed GP Jaswant Rathore attack four female patients in his surgery.

Police officers fear he may have assaulted even more women during his three decades at a Dudley practice.

The 60-year-old is starting a 12-year sentence after jurors convicted him of 10 sexual assaults.

Senior investigating officer Detective Inspector Michelle Thurgood said: "It was a horrific breach of a position of trust. This was somebody who was a trusted GP, respected in the community. Many of the patients had gone to him for many years, so absolutely trusted him.

Vulnerable

"We go to our doctor when we're at our most vulnerable and he has abused that trust by carrying out those offences."

Rathore, of Ploughmans Walk, Wall Heath, denied 18 counts of sexual assault between November 28, 2008, and March 26, 2015.

Prosecutors alleged he attacked eight female patients, who cannot be named for legal reasons, after duping them into thinking he was treating their medical problems.

But he told police touching of the women was 'medically appropriate' and he had acted professionally during appointments with patients at Castle Meadows Surgery.

Following a seven-week trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court (see above), jurors found him guilty of 10 sexual assaults, committed during more than two-and-a-half years.

The jury acquitted him of eight further sexual offences allegedly committed against four other women.

DI Thurgood, of West Midlands Police's public protection unit, said she was concerned more victims could be suffering in silence but confirmed



GP Jaswant Rathore has been jailed for 12 years

there were no plans to bring further prosecutions against Rathore.

She added: "He has been a GP for a long time, there could be other victims.

"What I would say is, if anybody who is reading the Press and they think that they are a victim, then please come forward.

"If you can find the strength to come forward, do so. You'll be given all the time and support you need to help you."

Rathore's offending came to light in May 2015 when one of his victims spoke to police about her ordeal for the first time.

After gathering statements from victims, as well as securing medical and phone records, Rathore

was charged in December in relation to three women.

DI Thurgood confirmed it was the first time Rathore had been prosecuted for sex offences, adding: "[May 2015] was the first report ever in relation to him.

"Very quickly after her report, we had two further reports. We investigated the case against the three women. When he was charged, we put out a press release. That led to numerous phone calls and a further five women coming forward.

Bravery

"The women have all shown extreme bravery in coming forward. The majority of them were extremely traumatised by what had happened to them. They couldn't quite believe what had happened to them."

The sex offender, who was supported throughout his trial by his wife and daughters, refused to answer any questions during police interview and instead offered prepared statements.

DI Thurgood said there was 'no interaction' from Rathore, adding: "In all his interviews, it was just prepared statements, he didn't comment.

"He was just very cold, he had obviously taken advice from his counsel, so didn't say anything."

During the trial, prosecutor Ms Heidi Kubik claimed Rathore assaulted the women to fuel his 'illicit sexual desire' while at the helm of the Milking Bank practice. He told patients he needed to carry out the treatment to alleviate their pain but instead sexually assaulted them.

The prosecutor said patients trusted the family doctor, who had been at the surgery since 1986.

Senior Crown prosecutor Ian Pinkney, of West Midlands Crown Prosecution Service's complex casework unit, said: "Dr Jaswant Rathore abused his position of trust to carry out a series of sexual assaults against a number of his female patients.

"He preyed on women who contacted him for medical assistance, but rather than offer them help, he assaulted them for his own sexual gratification."

Shamed doctor is jailed for 12 years

A DISGRACED family doctor who preyed on women patients at his surgery has been jailed for 12 years.

Shamed Dr Jaswant Rathore committed 10 sexual assaults on four women patients and was told by Judge Michael Challinor that his 32-year career had been turned into a 'complete shipwreck'.

The Indian-born GP attacked victims who had gone to his Castle Meadows Surgery in Milking Bank, Dudley, with everyday complaints as mundane as hayfever. The 60-year-old, from Wall Heath, delivered unnecessary massage treatment to patients to satisfy his own lust, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Judge Challinor continued: "You used your standing in the community as a cloak behind which to carry out assaults on your patients for your personal gratification."

Judge Challinor said the sexual assaults which occurred over a two and a half year period had been 'planned and sustained'. Rathore, of Ploughman's Walk, insisted he had always acted professionally and the touching had been medically appropriate.

He was found guilty of eight offences of sexual assault and two counts of assault by penetration, against four women patients. The jury acquitted him of charges alleging eight further sexual offences against four more women.

Mr Alan Jenkins, defending said: "He will now be erased from the medical register and will never practise again."

Rathore was made the subject of a sexual harm prevention order for 15 years and put on the sexual offenders register for life.



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Sex game murderer has shown no remorse

KILLER Ashley Foster faces at least 26 years behind bars for murdering teenager Megan Bills in an act of 'evil cruelty beyond belief'.

The twisted 24-year-old was obsessed with deviant sex and confessed in a letter to his mother that the 17-year-old had been strangled during violent love-making. It came just hours after they met for the first time following his release from jail three days earlier after trying to stab one of his sisters.

He has been jailed for life for murdering Megan with a minimum term of 26 years.

Foster, whose two pleas to let him strangle a previous girlfriend during sex had been rejected, wrote: "We ended up having sex. She tells me she likes to be strangled, so I obliged. I strangled her and she loved it so much... but then as I released her, her eyes closed."

But he repeatedly refused to say exactly how Megan met her death in his room at the New Horizons hostel for ex-offenders in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill, on April 16 last year – and declined to give evidence at his Wolverhampton Crown Court trial. He admitted preventing her burial but denied manslaughter and murder.

He hid the body in a wardrobe that was wrapped in cling-film to speed up decomposition of the corpse.

Detective Inspector Caroline Corfield said: "He never showed any remorse." Megan's adoptive parents Dawn and Martin Bills said: "To have lost Megan and had her body concealed until it had rotted beyond recognition is painful beyond words, and demonstrates an evil cruelty beyond any decent comprehension."

MURDER victim Megan Bills had a difficult start in life and was put into foster care at the age of four but her fortunes changed two years later when she was placed with a loving Stourbridge family.

Dawn and Martin Bills, who already had a son – James, now aged 26 – formally adopted the seven year old the following year and she took their surname, she had previously been Megan Smith. Megan attended two local schools – St James Church of England Primary and then Ridgewood High School – enjoyed swimming, sang in a church choir and played the flute.

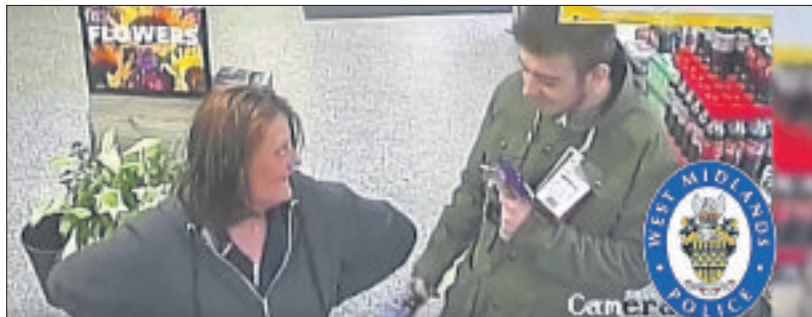
Then she started becoming increasingly independent. "It all seemed to happen in the blink of an eye," recalled her mother. At the age of 16 Megan moved in with the family of her then boyfriend Josh Edwards, now 19, who she met in August 2014. She left school the following year and went to Dudley College where she passed a year-long hairdressing course in 2016 before beginning training at Halesowen College.

Changed

She moved into a housing project but spent increasing amounts of time at a bedsit in Hall-church Road, Dudley, where her boyfriend now lived, breaking the terms of her tenancy Megan moved in with him full time at the start of last year but he found her a changed person.

Josh explained: "She was hanging around with the wrong people which led to rows between us. She would just leave and come back drunk. She was mixing with a different set of friends who I did not know."

The last of these was so bad that the police were called and the couple made the decision to break up. Josh returned the flat keys to the council and went back to live with his parents on March 29. He last saw her on April 14 – the day after Ashley Foster was freed on licence from Winson Green prison.



Ashley Foster chats with 17-year-old Megan Bills shortly after they first met, hours later he was to kill her

What neither he nor her adoptive parents realised, was that she had broken into his former flat and was squatting there. Megan had neither a mobile phone nor computer that worked which made it very difficult for her family to keep in touch. They last saw the teenager on April 11. Mrs Bills revealed: "We had made plans for her to move back in with us at the end of the May Bank Holiday but she asked for time and space to sort herself out first." As a result Mrs Bills did not report her as missing until May 5 – the day after the body was found in the wardrobe.

Foster admitted preventing the lawful burial of the teenager and a letter written by him to his mother gave police a vital breakthrough. The note, found in a cupboard, confessed to strangling Megan during violent sex but maintained it was an accident.

Analysis of his two mobile phones revealed that in the days following Megan's death he made numerous searches of the internet for "snuff" movies – pornographic films involving murder.

Detective Inspector Caroline Corfield, who led police inquiries, said: "What normal human being would start searching this kind of porn after doing what he had done? It clearly turned him on."

Officers also recovered Megan's clothes and one of his shirts with her blood on it which had been dumped in a bin outside the hostel.

Mrs Bills had no idea that Megan had started to mix with people from the New Horizons hostel for ex-offenders in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill, where 24-year-old Foster was given a room.

He met Megan for the first time just hours before she died on April 16, Easter Sunday. She arrived at the hostel, where she had been several times previously, around midday. She asked Foster for a cigarette and quickly returned to his room to cadge another one. They left the hostel together soon afterwards to buy cannabis and bought cans of drink from a shop. The pair spent a short time at the hostel between two shopping trips before Megan returned with Foster for the final time around 1.50pm.

The hostel's CCTV showed them going into his room and captured Megan again in the doorway at 3.35pm. She was never seen alive again.

On May 3 staff at the hostel noticed a suspicious smell in Foster's room. The following day staff made the gruesome discovery. Foster was arrested the same day after being spotted in Walsall town centre.

Memorial garden revamp is closer

A CAMPAIGN to refurbish a memorial garden for babies has moved a step forward after Dudley Council approached two trusts for funding.

Plans have been in the pipeline to improve Gornal Babies Memorial Garden at Gornal Wood Crematorium and Cemetery, after concerns it was becoming untidy.

The council has approached two trusts for funds, which could see £25,000 generated, and one trust has already indicated it will help.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for bereavement services, said: "The memorial garden is an important element of Gornal Wood cemetery, giving bereaved parents a dedicated space to contemplate and lay tributes to their lost children."

"By sensitively re-landscaping the space, with allocated and purpose-built compartments for precious objects, we hope to make a calming place to sit and reflect."

Corporate teams can enter road run

BUSINESS chiefs have backed a fun run which is again being held in Halesowen later this year.

The Black Country Chamber of Commerce supports The Black Country Road Run, which will be taking place on July 1.

The event is co-ordinated by Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club and this year the event will also include a corporate challenge.

Businesses can participate in either a 10km run or fun run with teams of five, which can be a team building exercise or promoting fitness in the workplace.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Carrier bag charge is a pain on the pocket

IF THE comments by the chattering classes over the past few days are to be believed, one might be forgiven for thinking that the 5p charge on carrier bags has been an unparalleled success, rivalled only by sliced bread.

Maybe it's just me, but when I go to the supermarket checkout, I don't feel a sense of awe at the genius of those behind the scheme. I just feel discomfort as I stuff a packet of frozen peas in my trouser pocket because yet again I've left my bags in the car.

What is interesting is that I've just read that these "bags for life", which the do-gooders keep banging on about, are not quite as green as they would have us believe.

Recent research says they actually cause 175 times more damage to the environment than the conventional "throw away" ones. And let's be honest, did anybody actually throw them away after using them just once? I've still got old bags dating back from the 1980s, which are used to store old newspapers and magazines.

Indeed, another statistic is that plastic shopping bags account for just 0.2 per cent of household waste, but I suppose we can't let the fact get in the way of a bit of virtue signalling.

But here's another thought, if plastic is so bad, instead of charging us 5p or 10p for our bags, why don't they just give us free paper bags like they used to? These could go in the recycling with our old newspapers, and everyone's a winner.

Anyhow, that argument seems to have been lost, and plastic-free aisles are about to become the next big thing. In five years time those shrink-wrapped apples and grapes will probably become as obsolete as ration books.

Sounds fair enough on paper, but I do wonder if anybody actually took the trouble to ask the supermarkets why they sell fruit and veg in plastic packaging to begin with.

Because an industry insider tells me it is not because supermarkets get some perverse pleasure out of wasting money or trying to destroy the planet. It is because the packaging has been carefully designed to make the produce last longer, in order to reduce waste.

So we might save on a bit of plastic here and there, but end up throwing away tons of perfectly good fruit and veg. And of course, when people do select the fruit and veg from the plastic-free aisle, they will put it into plastic bags.

Still, got to be seen to do something, haven't we?

Farewell to a legendary broadcaster, Ed Doolan



The passing of Ed Doolan, a broadcaster who never shied from telling it how it is



Donald Trump – not the first US President to have his intellect brought into question



Penelope Keith as Margo in The Good Life, a role which she will never shake off

Wheel be careful, driving in the city

ACCORDING to new data, it is harder to pass your driving test in Wolverhampton than in most other parts of the country. Which poses an obvious question: how many drivers in Wolverhampton actually bother to take the test?

WHEREVER you drive in Britain you will witness occasional incidents of carelessness and inattention. But Wolverhampton is the only place where I've seen a driver with a plate on his lap eating a meat pie with a knife and fork, at the traffic lights. It takes a brave cop to come between a Black Country man and his pasty.

SO farewell, Ed Doolan, the veteran BBC broadcaster who died last week. Always good listening, always wise company, Doolan believed there was less evil in the world than some people seemed to think, and that when life seems to conspire against us, it's probably just a cock-up. As he told me nearly 20 years ago: "Never put down to malice anything you can put down to stupidity. It's usually something that's gone wrong or some jobsworth throwing his weight around on a bad morning."

DOOLAN is generally described as a champion of the underdog. But some underdogs strained his patience. I remember a caller to his Radio WM show complaining that there was a gap in her fence and her kids were getting out and playing by the road. "You get a hammer, some nails and some wood," said Doolan, "and you fix the hole." He repeated this patiently, word for word, several times until the protesting caller got the message and hung up. "Ah, the dependency culture," sighed Doolan. He had a soft heart but was never a soft touch.

A READER, who apparently wishes half the

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



population dead, writes: "When the current batch of Little Englanders are pushing up the daisies, the young people of today will be in charge and will reapply to join the EU." Splendid. I have taken the liberty of drafting the question for the 2040 EU Referendum voting form: "Hey, kids, would you like Britain to become one of the chief financiers and the military wing of the Great European Empire, now embracing Turkey and Albania and pushing its borders up against Russia and Syria? Or would you prefer Britain to remain the independent, peaceful and prosperous global trading nation it is now in 2040, controlling its own frontiers, respected throughout the world and acting as friend and honest broker to the USA, China, Russia and Europe?"

DONALD Trump is not the first US president to be mocked for his intellect, or lack of it. There was an unkind, and untrue, story of President George W Bush being horrified at a news report that three Brazilian soldiers had been killed in Iraq. "Remind me again," the president asked his aides. "How many is a brazilion?"

I WAS reminded of that tale by a letter in the Daily Telegraph this week suggesting a new name for any unimaginably large sum of money. Carillions.

NO matter how they package and rebrand her, Penelope Keith, currently presenting Village of the Year (C4), is forever Margo, the snif-

fy, houseproud snob from The Good Life. And whichever village finally emerges as the winner in this oddly-conceived daytime show, I bet you won't be allowed to visit it until Margo has made you take off your muddy boots.

INCIDENTALLY, I see one of the shortlisted villages is my regular holiday haunt of Beer in Devon. Whatever Margo says, just stay away. You'd hate it. Really.

ONE of the claims made by a retired officer during the debate on army recruiting is that war is good for recruitment. I know of no official figures to support this but I do recall the steady stream of would-be heroes who turned up at my local TA drill hall in 1982 eager to join the colours and do their bit in the Falklands. Some were of the generation that just missed National Service when it was wound up in the 1960s. "I always felt I was cheated of something," one of them told me.

CHEATED? But of what? The great thing about National Service was the unknown. I knew two blokes who were called up in the 1950s. One spent his two years "counting blankets at Catterick," as he put it. The other spent it on Sunderland flying boats in the Far East. When people talk about bringing back National Service, they should tell us what sort of National Service they mean. Put me down for the Sunderlands.

PETER Rhodes will be speaking at Wolverhampton Literature Festival on Sunday, January 28. See: <http://www.wolverhamptonliteraturefestival.co.uk/peter-rhodes/4594118684>

TALKING POINT



Struggling to keep those new year goals

'Less is more' was the theme when it came to making my 2018 New Year resolutions. As the clock chimed 12 I determined I would eat and spend less and not swear so much.

Come December 31 2018 there will be a slimline, more ladylike me with more available funds in my purse and a not-so stressed credit card.

The only 'more' I was allowing myself was with reading, in the hope this lead to greater relaxation.

But a little early research proved a tad disheartening. Statistics show that only eight per cent of people actually stick to their resolutions, with losing weight and spending less the most common goals.

However, in retrospect, the first month of the year is not a good time to make such resolutions.

For example, the 25 per cent of us who have resolved to spend less forgot one great obstacle – the January sales. The four-letter word is emblazoned over every shop and supermarket window tormenting us, pulling at our purse strings.

Not only did I trawl the rails and racks of every high street fashion shop, I bought a three-piece suite. It was half price, though, and I don't have to start paying for a year so does that actually count as a fail? Then there is the challenge for the 32 per cent of us determined to eat less. Firstly, the cupboards are still full of all the extra food shipped in for Christmas, exasperated by the selection of chocolates and sweets Santa popped in your stocking.

All this food can't just be allowed to get to waste. And, as we are in the throes of winter, our bodies demand we eat more to protect against the weather, it's like hibernation. I am genetically programmed to fail on this resolution.

No excuses for not curbing my foul mouth though. Despite the provocation of some frankly appalling drivers who would thoroughly deserve the unladylike profanities, this is achievable. However, at 20p a time per curse it is further compounding my failure to spend less.

Success, so far, however on the reading, thanks to a small library of Christmas gift books and an unwillingness to break away from the fire and venture out on a cold, dark evening.

This would achieve the aim of being more relaxed if I wasn't so worried about how much I was spending on a new sofa, all the calories I had consumed to make a dent in the food mountain and how much the journey on the M6 had benefited the swear jar. But I remain convinced that less is more – next year I will make fewer resolutions.

DIANE DAVIES

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to Sandwell's main line, where they
would have to change.

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They still think they can only have

slow trams when they actually have
a fast, main line railway through the
heart of the Black Country and its cap-
ital, Dudley, at Castle Gate. All that
is missing are the stations and fast
trains!

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tels, eating places and food stores are
at the bottom of Castle Hill in Low
Town where the Dudley main line
railway station is. Rebuild it and use
it for trains without bothering with
shuttling passengers on the tram to

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wasteful Metro tram.

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homes on the sites of those empty office
blocks that are such an eyesore, Caven-
dish House and in Flood Street.

TIM WELLER
Halesowen

Can't afford to feed, so don't breed

SCHOOLS don't just teach
anymore.

The ever-changing roles
of the schools and teachers
now includes taking on pa-
rental roles.

In a First World country
in the 21st century, school
doesn't just educate; in fact,
schools are feeding their pu-
pils breakfast, washing and
laundering children's uni-
forms, and even charging up
phones for parents who run
out of electricity tokens.

I can't imagine what
would happen to some of
these children if it wasn't
for these extra-curricular
services!

We're not a developing
nation, no child should be
turning up to school with an
empty stomach or in dirty
clothes.

The time has come to re-
mind parents of the most
basic of needs; and it's harsh
but true that if they can't af-
ford to feed, they shouldn't
breed!

VICKY H BARTLETT
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone
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story, write to The Editor,
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WV1 1ES

Too much waste in the NHS

I DO not agree that Theresa
May is single handedly re-
sponsible for the state of the
NHS. Surely the head of the
NHS has to take some re-
sponsibility for the terrible
situation it is currently in.

Whilst some of the prob-
lem may be attributed to
lack of funding, certainly
there are other issues to be
addressed. The money has
to be used in the best pos-
sible way and waste cut to a
minimum. It's obvious that
this is not being done by the
people who run the NHS.

Expensive drugs are regu-
larly thrown away, expen-
sive equipment is not re-
trieved by hospitals from
patients who no longer re-
quire it, and paramedics in
ambulances are frequently
sent out to deal with regular
local drunks.

We need to look at the
funding as a whole and how
efficiently its being used be-
fore we demand the resig-
nation of the PM.

CHRIS BAKER
Halesowen

Call to halt fuss over Bell End name

I WOULD like to point out that the majority of the resi-
dents of Bell End, some of them elderly, do not want the
name changed and this has been very upsetting for us all.

It was started last year when some teenagers posted a
photograph of themselves on social media, sitting on the
road sign for Bell End and laughing. This road sign later
'disappeared'.

We are fed up with all this unwanted publicity which
has been blighting our lives. We want to be left in peace to
enjoy living in Bell End.

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They're in the house – they've got a gun!

A POLICEWOMAN feared she would die as a teenager pointed what looked like a handgun at her.

Pc Jemma Follows was responding to a report of a burglary in Stourbridge when she was confronted in the dark by 19-year-old Reece Lones.

The officer yelled at Lones, asking what he was doing but the teenager pulled out a gun. It was only later that it was found to be an imitation.

Pc Follows reacted by pointing her Taser weapon at Lones but then the police constable heard a 'click'.

The 29-year-old admitted she thought she was going to die and her two young children would lose their mother. But instead Lones dodged into another room.

In a dramatic video, released by police from Pc Follows' body-camera, she can be heard appealing for back-up on her radio saying 'Oscar 91 they're in the house and they've got a gun'.

Taxi

She ran outside and jumped into a nearby taxi to hunt Lones down. He had fled out of the back of the house in Park Street, Stourbridge. The taxi took the officer to where the suspects were last seen. She then tasered a 17-year-old who had been acting aggressively. He was alleged to have had a knife and cannabis in his possession.

Lones was arrested two hours later after being spotted by firearms officers on Stourbridge's busy High Street.

Dash-cam footage from their patrol car can be seen in the police video as they screech to a halt in the High Street before jumping out shouting at Lones to get on the ground at gun-point.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard



Reece Lones has been sent to a young offenders institution

Lones had been armed with an imitation handgun designed to look like a 9mm semi-automatic pistol. It was found dumped in the house from which the defendant ran away.

The property is owned by his mother and was not occupied at the time. He had 'issues' with his father and, on November 5, she agreed to let her son live there for a short time. Ten days later she asked him to leave. But Lones, who did not have a key, had nowhere else to stay and got back inside through a damaged skylight on November 18, activating an alarm he did not know had been installed, and police were called at 10pm.

Pc Follows, an officer with eight years experience, recalled: "When I initially saw the gun I was completely shocked as, in my whole career, I have never encountered a firearm on the streets. I believed there was a realistic



Pc Jemma Follows believed she may never see her children again

chance I would be shot. I was scared. I have two very young children and believed for a moment that I might not see them again."

Mr Shiva Misra, defending Lones, who had two previous convictions for criminal damage, conceded: "He was in drink and was foolish in the extreme. Goodness knows why he had the gun but he understands how scared and fearful the officer was."

Lones, of no fixed address, pleaded guilty to possession of an imitation firearm with intention to cause fear and was given two years three months detention in a young offenders institution.

The other teenager, who was Tasered, can't be named for legal reasons. He was charged and given a conditional caution.

See the video of the incident at www.expressandstar.com

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Academy heading in right direction but can do better

INCONSISTENT teaching and above-average fixed-term exclusions at a secondary school has seen it rated as 'requiring improvement' by inspectors.

Philip Shackleton, headteacher at Oldbury Academy, which has 1,568 pupils, said he was 'slightly disappointed' with the result.

Inspectors ranked the school 'good' in sub-categories for personal development, behaviour and welfare, as well as its 16 to 19 study programmes. But education watchdog Ofsted said it required improvement for effectiveness of leadership and management, its quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and its outcomes for pupils.

Bridge bid to ease M5 junction jams

A BRIDGE could be built over a motorway in a multi-million pound bid to cut congestion at a junction.

Transport bosses are drawing up plans for the bridge over the roundabout at Junction 1 of the M5 in West Bromwich, which would see A41 traffic continue over the motorway.

Drivers currently have to deal with queues on a daily basis at the busy island, which connects The Expressway and Birmingham Road.

It comes as council chiefs continue to seek funding for a planned revamp of the Birchley Island in Oldbury, further down the M5 at Junction 2.

Bosses are desperate to find a solution to congestion problems faced every day at the two junctions where traffic regularly grinds to a halt.

They will now work on securing funding for the bridge scheme.

The report states: "The quality of teaching in the school is improving, but continues to vary across subjects."

"Leaders' evaluation of the school's overall performance is too generous because it focuses overly on the positive changes that have occurred since September 2017."

"Leaders do not focus enough on pupils' achievement and progress from individual starting points."

Robust

Inspectors also said that the number of fixed-term exclusions was 'above national averages,' adding: "Leaders are aware of this and have robust action plans in place to reduce exclusions."

The school's strengths were also highlighted in the report. It added: "The headteacher, supported by a restructured and capable leadership team, has accelerated the pace of improvement. This has been supported by the successful recruitment of high-quality teaching staff and leaders. The sixth form is good. Pupils are very well cared for at the school and their behaviour is good."

Mr Shackleton said: "I am very proud of everything we have achieved together since I became headteacher in September 2016, and I know we are moving in the right direction."

Write way to help prisoners of conscience



Group chair Ernest Cruchley from Halesowen Global Justice Group with Mandy Dobie and Reverend Canon Dominic Melville

A DRIVE to help relieve the suffering of political prisoners was attended by almost 30 people in Halesowen.

Members of Halesowen Global Justice Group invited people to write a card to a prisoner of conscience at their annual Letter Writing For Justice day.

For two hours a room at St John the

Baptist Church in the High Street was where people showed their concern. The group provided cards and addresses while visitors were invited to make donations towards postage.

Member Chaz Stoll said: "It is a real positive start to the year. People from Halesowen and the surrounding areas come together to help others all

over the globe. We want to help those suffering from injustice. It's clear that some of our cards do get through to the people intended, as we've had a lot of replies over the years."

The event was organised by Ernest Cruchley, aged 80, and attended by the vicars of St John the Baptist Church and St Margaret of Antioch Church.

MP has won support for music venues

A CAMPAIGN to stop music venues being threatened with closure has won support from ministers, who said developers must be responsible for soundproofing new-build properties.

Sajid Javid, the Housing Secretary, said he would work with the music industry to improve planning policy. It followed a campaign led by Warley's Labour MP John Spellar that was backed by stars including Sir Paul McCartney and Pink Floyd's Nick Mason.

The campaign highlighted the threat to grassroots music clubs and gig venues, which have been forced to close owing to noise complaints by new residents.

Mr Javid said in future there would be a responsibility on property developers to identify and solve potential sound problems when building near to music venues.

"Music venues play a vital role in our communities, bringing people together and contributing to the local economy and supporting the country's grass roots music culture," he said.

Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson, the MP for West Bromwich East, said: "It is great news that John Spellar's campaign is being backed by the Government. It is a huge victory for venues, artists and music lovers."

New boss taking over at NHS trust

A NEW chairman has been appointed at Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. Harry Turner, one of Dudley and Walsall NHS Trust's current non-executive directors and vice-chair, will step up from February 1. Ben Reid is leaving to become chairman at The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust.

Predictably reassuring

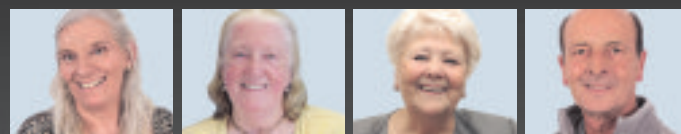
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It's a tough job but surrounded by the professional dancers and female stars Ore seemed to love hosting the tour

Debbie's the darling of Strictly

Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour – Arena Birmingham
IT seemed fairly obvious who the favourite was as we walked into Arena Birmingham to take our seats for the Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour.

"I can't wait to see Debbie McGee," said one. "She's so amazing," cooed another. And the packed Arena seemed to echo that. When she did her first dance – the jive – the applause was deafening.

And, after topping the leader board level with the reigning TV series champion Joe McFadden, it was Debbie who walked off with the glitter ball. This 11th tour kicked off in Birmingham on Friday night in stunning fashion with golden palm trees and statues – supposed to be the dancing Oscars? Certainly the professional dancers in their gold skimpy outfits would grace any film set.

The host, 2016 series winner Ore Oduba, came on to rapturous applause and introduced the professional dancers, including Amy Dowden from Dudley who runs a dance school with her fiancé.

Their performances were very impressive, as commented on by the three judges the usual Craig Revel Horwood –

REVIEW

By Sue Attwater

"Did you leave your smile at home?" commented Ore who bantered well with him and the other two judges Dame Darcey Bussell, her first time judging on tour and the very sparkly-suited Brun Tonioli.

Then on to the really important ones – the stars including, of course Debbie and Joe, with the rest of the magnificent seven including Gemma Atkinson, Susan Calman, Davood Ghadami, Jonnie Peacock and Alexandra Burke, who all performed their two favourite dances from the TV series with the judges giving their score, for guidance only.

In the end it was the audience's choice as they texted the name of the person they wanted to win. And with each text 10p went to Sport Relief.

The TV show has been nominated for a top award and the audience was encouraged by Ore to vote. There is no doubt both the series and the live tour are definitely worth a 10.

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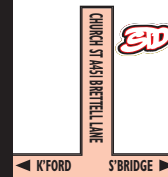
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Duncan trail to celebrate borough's football hero

FOOTBALL fans can now go on a Dudley town trail devoted to England and Manchester United legend Duncan Edwards.

A leaflet has been relaunched by Dudley Council highlighting landmarks in the town linked to the Dudley-born footballer.

The leaflet will allow people to journey on a self-guided tour of landmarks. Highlights include the memorial plaque at his former home on the Priory Estate, the stained glass windows at St Francis Church which were dedicated to the player, a life-sized statue in the town centre, together with his final resting place.

Part of the famous 'Busby Babes' United, Edwards died on February 21, 1958, from injuries sustained in the Munich air disaster, when the aircraft bringing the team back from a match against Red Star Belgrade crashed at the German airport.

Anniversary

A total of 23 died including eight players alongside club officials, journalists, supporters and aircrew. Events will take place this year to mark the 60th anniversary.

Mayor of Dudley Councillor Dave Tyler said: "Duncan Edwards was an icon of a generation, who came from humble beginnings in Dudley to become one of the footballing greats.

"With February 6 being the 60th anniversary of the Munich air disaster, we thought it would be an opportune time to update and relaunch the leaflet. We are proud he was born and bred in Dudley borough and still maintain close ties with Manchester United. They have kindly lent us a



Duncan Edwards died on February 21, 1958, from injuries sustained in the disaster

number of his shirts for display at the new museum at the Archives, which is one of the stops on this tour.

"If you visit the archives before 30 March you will also be able to view the temporary exhibition dedicated to Dudley's sporting hero."

A minute's silence is to be observed at Manchester United's home Premier League match against Huddersfield on

February 3 in memory of the victims of the Munich Air Disaster.

A ceremony is also to be held inside Old Trafford on February 6 on the exact 60th anniversary of the air crash, from 2.45pm.

Copies of the leaflet are available at the museum, Dudley libraries, tourist attractions and online at discover.dudley.gov.uk website.

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Fine for cabbie who refused guide dog

A TAXI DRIVER who refused to pick up a blind man and his guide dog, claiming he was allergic to dogs and frightened of them, has been ordered to pay more than £1,000.

Jason Lane and his guide dog Crispin had to order another taxi after Abdul Khalik said he would not take them from Bearwood into Birmingham city centre. They were on their way to celebrate Jason's mother's birthday.

Mr Lane, 48, said: "It was really frustrating. I had my 84-year-old mum waiting for me in Birmingham and the taxi was already late, then he literally just drove off."

Mr Lane said he regularly used the taxi company Premier Cars in Langley and had never had a problem travelling with Crispin before.

Khalik, 42, of Crompton Road, Handsworth, defended himself through an interpreter at Walsall Magistrates Court. He denied refusing to have an assistance dog in his car but claimed he was both allergic and frightened of dogs.

Khalik was found guilty of failure/refusal to carry out a booking made by a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay Sandwell Council's £1,030 costs plus a £20 victim surcharge. He surrendered his taxi licence after the matter was reported to the council.

It's a boy! Dendi is zoo's new arrival



Dudley Zoo's baby baboon Dendi is the second for Addis IT'S a boy! The gender of a zoo's newest addition has been revealed.

Keepers at Dudley Zoo threw a 'gender reveal party' for the gelada baboon, which delighted the attraction's other resident baboons.

This saw two boxes packed with coloured plastic children's balls, hay and treats put in the gelada's indoor den. It didn't take long for 13-year-old alpha male Elano and adult female, Tana, to tip out blue balls and reveal the news that new addition Dendi is a boy – his fourth son. The youngster is the second baby for 11-year-old Addis, who is also mum to three-year-old Billie.

The new baby was born on December 21 and has been named after Mount Dendi, the second highest volcano in Ethiopia, which is the home country of the species.

Dendi joins brothers Billie, Gimbi and Ambo – who spent hours afterwards playing with the ball-pit balls – as well as adult females Jimma and Tana in their half-acre natural hillside enclosure on the lower zoo site.

Special Ned's ale is Wonder-ful Stuff

THE Wonder Stuff and Ned's Atomic Dustbin have teamed up with a brewery to launch a limited edition ale.

Ned's Wonder has been created with Birmingham's Froth Blowers Brewing Company for this year's Love From Stourbridge tour.

A competition is being held to win a place at a special acoustic concert and tasting session with Wonder Stuff frontman Miles Hunt and Ned's Atomic Dustbin singer Jonn Penney in Stourbridge on January 31.

The Love From Stourbridge tour featuring The Wonder Stuff and Ned's Atomic Dustbin takes place in April. The bands will also be joined by DJ Graham Crabb from Pop Will Eat Itself, another Stourbridge band.

There are two dates at Birmingham's O2 Academy on April 14 and 15, and the first has already sold out.

● Penney for his thoughts – page 25

Councils find trafficked child victims of modern day slavery

COUNCILS in the Black Country and Staffordshire picked up 13 suspected child victims of human trafficking and modern day slavery in three months.

Figures from the National Crime Agency show how many referrals were made to the UK Human Traf-

ficking Centre (UKHTC) from July to September last year. There were 14 across our region.

Five came from Dudley Council, four from Wolverhampton, three from Sandwell Council and one each from both Walsall and Stafford Borough Council. All were children apart from one adult referred from Dudley. West Midlands Police referred 27, including three children, over the same period.

Referrals are made to the UKHTC to determine if they are a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery. During the investigation the person is given a safe house and 45 days 'recovery period'.

If deemed a victim they can remain in the UK if they co-operate with police under a year-long stay, or if they successfully apply through the Home Office.

Family inspires comic's new show

COMEDIAN David Baddiel will bring his new one-man show to Dudley Town Hall on April 19.

The Olivier Award nominated My Family: Not the Sit-com arrives in Dudley following its sold out run at London's Menier Chocolate Factory and in the West End.

It is described as a show about memory, ageing, infidelity, dysfunctional relatives, social media, golf and gay cats. Tickets cost £25.50 and can be bought by calling the box office on (01384) 812812 or at the boroughhalls.co.uk website.

Writer and comic Baddiel first found fame as part of The Mary Whitehouse Experience with Rob Newman and went on to work with the Black Country's Frank Skinner, including Fantasy Football.

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Government urged to act over hospital

THE site of Smethwick's Midland Metropolitan Hospital was deserted this week and Black Country MP John Spellar has urged for work to get back underway.

It comes as work on Carillion's public sector construction sites was paused pending decisions about their future. The infrastructure giant went into liquidation last week after rescue talks with its lenders and the Government failed.

Mr Spellar, Labour MP for Warley, visited the site of the £350 million 'super hospital' this week as he called for the Government to step in.

Steel structures in Cranford Street were surrounded by silence as the latest delay comes among a series of building setbacks.

Mr Spellar said that the 'big message' for the Government was to free up funding so that work could continue.

"This cannot be left as a monument to incompetence. We need the Government to free up the funding

and send out the message that they can pull their teams back together. If this doesn't happen soon then people will start to find posts elsewhere," he added.

Carillion was involved in a range of construction and infrastructure projects in the UK from new rail lines and electrification, to road widening and bypass schemes, as well as building two major new hospitals (the other being in Liverpool).

About 40 per cent of Carillion's revenue in 2016 was from construction projects both in the UK and overseas. Most of the rest of the company's revenue came from public sector contracts, such as maintaining, cleaning and supplying meals for schools, prisons and hospitals.

The opening of the Midland Met, which will replace Sandwell General as the main hospital in the borough, has already been delayed by at least six months. It is set to open next year and have around 700 beds and 15 operation theatres.



Warley MP John Spellar is concerned that work has come to a halt at the Black Country's new hospital

Major warehouse development now to get under way

WORK is due to start on a multi-million pound industrial development in Tipton that could help deliver a major jobs boost for the Black Country.

It comes more than a year after developer CEG secured planning permission from Sandwell Council for its ambitious \$132 million scheme to overhaul the historic Vaughan Trading Estate in Tipton, creating up to 1,000 jobs. Another 200 will be created by the building work.

The scheme involves flattening most of the existing buildings on land neighbouring the Thomas Dudley foundry and CAB Autos factory.

The start of work comes at a time when top quality industrial and warehouse space is in short supply.

Developer CEG aims to create up to 500,000 sq feet of space at Vaughan Park. Work on the first phase is set to commence shortly. CEG secured planning permission for the regeneration of the historic 28 acre site in September 2016 and is now managing the development of the first phase of units. This will offer up to five units totalling 80,000 sq ft and CEG says it will be ready for occupation later this year. Further 'design and build' opportunities are also available on the site.

Lawrence Escott, investment manager at CEG said: "This is a buoyant West Midlands commercial location."

Mayor's tax increase proposal is rejected

THE West Midlands Mayor's plans to add more than £10 a year onto council tax bills have been rejected by his own cabinet.

Andy Street initially wanted to raise his council tax precept by £12, but settled on £10.80 for each Band D property in a bid to pay for the running of his office and his transport plans.

But the Tory Metro Mayor's proposals were thrown out by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) cabinet, which includes five Labour council leaders and two Conservatives.

The Labour leaders - including Steve Eling from Sandwell Council and Sean Coughlan from Walsall Council - all voted against the plans.

Wolverhampton Council's Roger Lawrence was away and did not vote. However, his stand-in Councillor Pete Bilson, voted down the plan - a move that prompted surprise in some quarters after the WMCA agreed to prop up the city council's Interchange project, which has gone more than £30m over budget.

The cabinet, led by Coventry City Council leader George Duggins, is thought to have opposed the rise in protest at Government cuts to town hall budgets.

Councillor Coughlan said: "This was the first vote in a process that will see consultation and scrutiny, followed by a final vote in February. We were minded that as part of the consultation the public might say they don't want to put tax up, and on this occasion we agreed not to support the proposal. However, nothing is final and we do not want to pre-empt the decision of the consultation."

The £10.80-a-year increase had been proposed to raise £7.5 million to run the WMCA. If it is not approved, the Mayor could be forced to divert funds from other projects to cover the costs.

Parties on all sides believe that a compromise can be



Metro Mayor Andy Street

reached before next month's final vote.

A WMCA spokesman said: "The report to the combined authority board was the first formal stage of a scrutiny and consultation process that will run until February 9 when the board is scheduled to make the decision on the proposed budget."

"Options are being considered in light of the board's decision and further discussions on the draft budget will be held with WMCA members, the business community and other stakeholders in the run-up to February 9."

Mr Street, who was elected as the region's first Metro Mayor last year, recently described the figure as 'a relatively small amount' and said it was vital for the region's economic prosperity.

"We have said we are going to invest in our transport and bust congestion," he said.

"We have to actually have the capital investment available to do that."



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Thousands set to enjoy city literature festival

ALMOST 100 acts will help
bring an eclectic mix of music,
art, theatre and comedy to the
city for the second
Wolverhampton Literature
Festival.

Organiser Phil Turner said the
team behind the festivities hope visitor
numbers will top last year's record
of 3,000.

He said: "It was so successful last
year, we just wanted to do it again.
There's never been anything like this
in the city before and there's so much
writing and literary talent in Wolver-
hampton."

"Last year, and this year, it basically
happened on the good will and the talents
of people. Every single act was
local but this year we have spread it a
little bit further."

Venues

The three-day festival will see
events spill into venues across the city
including Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
Newhampton Arts Centre, The
Slade Rooms, Bantock House and The
Grand Theatre.

Workshops, theatrical performances
and debates, as well as events for children
including storytelling, have been
included on the line-up.

Award-winning writer and journal-
ist Will Self will headline the celebra-
tions, which will run from Friday until
Sunday.

Slade drummer Don Powell, Mag-
num keyboardist Mark Stanway, Only
Fools and Horses actor John Challis
and author Lynsey Hanley will also
feature.

The 'Great Big Children's Story
Time' event will see families enjoy
storytelling at Wolverhampton's 16 li-
braries simultaneously from 11.30am



Slade drummer Don Powell



Novelist and journalist Will Self



Mark Stanway of rock band Magnum



John Challis, best known as Boycie

on Saturday. Mr Turner said: "The
festival keeps the city and the venues
quite vibrant because there is so much
going on and that's the way it should
be."

Three themes – music and liter-
ature, politics and journalism and
community voices – are set to run
throughout the three-day celebrations.

Wolverhampton council's libraries ser-
vices won £13,250 of funding from the
Arts Council's Grants for Arts pro-
gramme to help grow this year's festi-
val, which is supported by the Express
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The funding boost meant the liter-
ature festival is secured for the next
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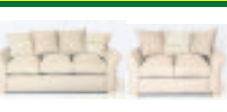
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Yew Tree Nursing Home — this is care with a difference

Commercial feature

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Life at Yew Tree Nursing Home is focused on the resident. In spite of requiring nursing care the residents are encouraged to enjoy quality of life.

Reminiscence is so valuable to our residents. It gives them the opportunity to draw back on happy times, memories, with those dear to them. The management team, Carol Lightwood and Vicky Mills, planned and recreated a wedding day for the residents to enjoy, just one of their many events throughout the year.

Workshops

All residents and families were invited to the special day and many of our residents enjoyed wearing wedding attire for the day embracing the special occasion.

The residents were involved in wedding-themed activities which started from the moment breakfast was served. Residents were able to cast their minds back to their own special day as preparations got under way. Workshops were arranged for hairdressing and make up for our brides of the day and button hole making for the gentlemen. The highlight was the wedding gown fashion show



Staff held fashion show with wedding attire

with staff members modelling wedding gowns from previous times. One staff member had the honour of wearing the original wedding dresses of three residents. The afternoon continued with a party with entertainment supplied by wedding singer Paulo Pinto.

Yew Tree Nursing Home is a home with a difference. Yew Tree has activities staff from 9am to 6pm seven days a week to ensure the residents are able to enjoy meaningful occupation throughout the day. Residents are encouraged to pick up past hobbies and have the opportunity to take up new ones too. The residents have a full diary with dates to look forward to.

Vicky produces the Yew Tree Gazette each month which is full of the home's

news, featuring home life, home improvements, and other items as well as outings to be enjoyed by residents and family.

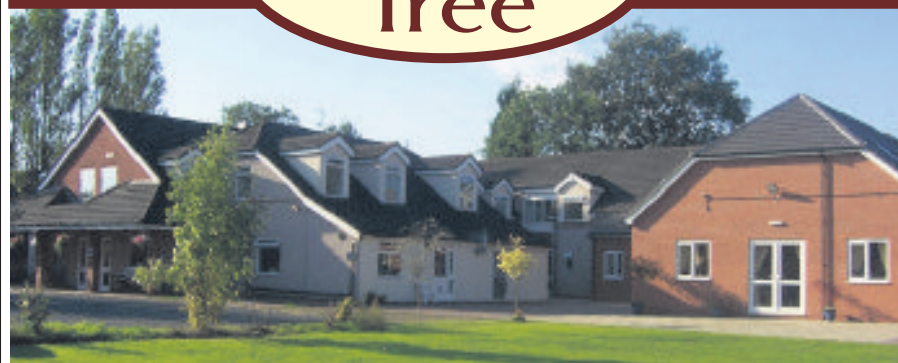
Residents are also encouraged to join community events in and around the village and have over the years successfully raised money for local charities to include Birmingham Dogs Home, Air Ambulance and most recently they raised a whopping £1,000 for Mary Stevens Hospice at our summer garden party.

Moving into a nursing home such as Yew Tree can be a very positive life changing experience for those who need good quality, holistic nursing care in a professional yet homely, safe environment.

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Commercial feature

Trevor EW Hickton Funeral Directors are a long established firm based in Cradley Heath. Formerly known as J.E.W. Hickton & Sons the company was established in 1909 and has been serving Cradley Heath, Halesowen and all the surrounding towns and areas since.

In 1909 Joe Hickton a well-known carpenter, builder, undertaker, local councillor and one time Mayor of Rowley Regis, opened a dedicated funeral home in Lower High Street, Cradley Heath to focus on the funeral directing side of business.

Along with his wife Rose, the local midwife, they became a large part of the local community.

Retired

Their son William 'Bill' Hickton came in to the business in 1937 and the father and son partnership began carrying out funerals across Cradley Heath and the surrounding areas, with Bill eventually taking over in 1957 after Joe retired.

Bill's son Trevor came in to the business in 1971. Trevor inherited J. E.W. Hickton Funeral Directors after Bill passed away in 2000. In 2005 the company was registered as a Limited UK company along with the name change to Trevor E.W. Hickton Ltd Funeral Directors. Trevor's son



Hicktons has been well-established since 1909

Ross came in to the business in 2006, followed by his other son Greg in 2010 and finally by his daughter Jodie in 2014. The same year, a brand new dedicated funeral home was built on the grounds of the original funeral home in Lower High Street.

Now with three private chapels of rest, three family arrangement rooms and a private working office, the company is able to cater to all needs and requirements of their clients in a friendly and inviting funeral home.

In 2015 the decision was made to renovate the funeral home in Colley Gate with a new reception area and new shop frontage. The office name was changed to incorporate the Hickton name.

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Visit www.TEWHickton.co.uk for more information and virtual tour of the company's premises.

Commercial feature

JFB Gates & Railings is a highly reputable family run business that is based in West Midlands.

As a company they thrive on delivering clients with excellent results along with a high quality customer service.

JFB Gates & Railings specialise in wrought iron gates, railings and balustrades. Managing director Martin Silvers said: "Our company is able to provide customers with hand-crafted wrought iron entrance gates, both manual and automatic, which will help to increase your home's security along with adding a touch of elegance.

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"With automatic gates we can install various systems such as intercom entry systems, digital code key phone entry systems, key systems and remote systems."

JFB manufacture wrought iron gates, railings and balustrades to your required design and sizes. All gates and railings are made from high quality steel. Gates can be galvanised or powder coated if requested to give you many years free from maintenance.

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Styles and finishes are carried out to meet customers' expectations

some examples of JFB'S gates and railings then visit the gallery page on their website.

All of the work carried out by the company is of the highest quality and is installed by a professional team who have more than 45 years worth of experience. They can provide a wide variety of styles and finishes to meet customers' exact design specification. Martin said: "Our company is able

to offer free no-obligation quotations along with friendly and helpful advice. No matter what your requirements may be we are certain that we can help. Our services are available to both private and commercial customers throughout the West Midlands and all of the surrounding areas.

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Commercial feature

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Staff will motivate and help you to achieve your goals whatever your age or fitness level

eating plans. Here are what a few of our members say:

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Miss Y

"I really enjoy coming to Gymophobics.

The staff are lovely, they get you feeling motivated to achieve your goals and you mix and make friends with all age groups, I highly recommend joining!" Miss S

"It is an absolute pleasure to leave this feedback. Gymophobics Halesowen is a must for getting into shape and your fitness

back on track. If you have poor mobility, don't worry, Andrea and her staff will help you with your own personal plan." Mrs W

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Commercial feature

DREAMLAND now has its biggest-ever sale on, with nearly every bed in store heavily reduced.

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Experts

Everyone at Dreamland knows how difficult a decision purchasing a new bed can be, that's why the staff have extensive product training, making sure their product knowledge is second to none. Founded by Mike Brown, Dreamland is an independent family business that is proud to serve the Black Country and the wider Midlands region. Instead of a delivery charge, customers are asked to make a donation, all of which goes to charity. Over the past few years, the store



Dreamland – the home of luxury beds, bed frames and headboards

has raised more than £150,000 for the Mary Stevens Hospice, thanks to the generosity of customers. Dreamland will even collect your old bed and assemble your divan.

The staff are vigorously trained to make sure they can help find the bed to suit all your needs – leading Dreamland to have a 5-star rating from their customers. This is because Dreamland provides its customers with the best-suited bed for them at the most affordable price possible. Dreamland is open seven days a week and is minutes from the Merry Hill shopping centre, with a free customer car park.

Visit the Dreamland store at 23 Mill St, Brierley Hill, DY5 2RG, call 01384 74166 or visit the website at www.dreamlandbedding.co.uk



Mike with the Hypnos range

Quality Asian food served in a magnificent setting

Commercial feature

THE Bangla Lounge restaurant is in the heart of Halesowen town centre opposite the church.

The restaurant has been serving quality pan Asian food for the last 14 years.

Atmosphere and decor

As you enter you are welcomed by magnificent setting and a delightful marriage of classic and luxurious modern – a wonderful comfortable experience.

The menu dishes

The menu offers a wide variety of mouth-watering dishes from red hot Goa to cool Kashmir. On the new 2018 menu, new dishes include South Indian garlic lamb or chicken, Dhabba Murgh, as well as exclusive house specials Tamarind king prawns, chicken makhani and home-made lamb dish. There are plenty of dishes for vegetarians and fish lovers including vegetable jhall, Roson Ki salmon, also any main dish from the menu using Quorn pieces.

The ingredients

All food is made freshly cooked on order and the dishes have the warmth of homemade Indian cooking. The chefs take great care in selecting the best quality ingredients. The restaurant also offers a large selection of wines and beer from around the world.



Owner and manager Bari Azad is ready to welcome you

Healthy eating

At Bangla Lounge, healthy eating is high on the agenda if you prefer to have low calorie version of your favourite dishes prepared, they are able to specially prepare most dishes using less oil, no butter or ghee-less food colouring resulting in lighter meals.

If you are planning a celebration, the restaurant's upstairs function room

can cater for up to 40 guests is ideal for work parties birthday celebrations anniversaries. Takeaways are available and home delivery service for free within a three-mile radius.

To book a table call 01215857020 or email: info@banglaloungehalesowen.co.uk

The restaurant can be found at 67-69 High Street, Halesowen, B63 3BQ.

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Jules and Hayden have recently taken over The Olde Queens Head and it's been going from strength to strength since.

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Olde Queens Head

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Minestrone Soup with a bread roll

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Aubergine Chilli
served with rice or chips (v)

DESSERTS

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White Chocolate Cheesecake (v)
served with ice cream or cream

Golden Vanilla Fudge Cheesecake
served with ice cream or cream

2 Course £15.99

3 Course £24.99



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Time to get ready for Byrne's night

Stand-up star Ed Byrne is returning to the West Midlands with his new show, *Spoiler Alert*. He will headline Stafford Gatehouse tomorrow and Birmingham Town Hall on Saturday.

Ed is on the road after a total sell-out Edinburgh Fringe run with his biggest ever tour to date. He says: "I originally intended to call the show 'I'll Millennial You in a Minute', but my promoter considered the title 'off-puttingly baffling'."

In the show, Ed explores the thin line between righteous complaining and brat-like whining and asks, 'are we right to be fed up, or are we spoiled?'

Ed is recognised as one of the finest observational comics in the industry. His TV credits include *Mock The Week*, *Have I Got News For You*, *The Graham Norton Show*, *Live At The Apollo*, *The One Show*, *Comic Relief Bake Off 2015*, *The World's Most Dangerous Roads* and, most recently, he and Dara O Briain filmed the follow up to their *Big Adventure* show for BBC Two entitled *Dara and Ed's Road to Mandalay*.

He will return to the region to headline Lichfield's Garrick on April 24.

Ed has been an acclaimed stand-up (with audiences and critics alike) for 20 years. His success with shows such as the *Roaring Forties*, *Different Class* and the 1998 Perrier-nominated *A Night At The Opera* led to him appearing on the box in the diverse likes of *Mock The Week*, *Father Ted*, *The One Show* and *All Star Mr & Mrs*, while his love of hillwalking resulted in him writing a regular column for *The Great Outdoors* magazine.

NATURAL

In fact, his love of natural history has crossed into television with appearances on *The One Show* (abseiling in Snowdonia), *Countryfile* (climbing Sgurr Dearg, the 'inaccessible pinnacle' on Skye) and presenting items on *Volcano Live* (BBC).

The Irish comic is firmly of a belief that the current breed of parents spoil their kids rotten whether it's to do with the ever-increasing size of garden trampolines, or his own kids' demand for elderflower cordial.

"My dad wasn't a bad dad, he was just a 1970s dad. If I could never see my children ever again from this moment on, I've already done more parenting than he did in my entire life. But, of course, I made a conscious decision that I was going to be an awesome dad. My wife will come back with tales from her friends of how awful their husbands are and she'll see me smiling and say 'alright, stop congratulating yourself just because such and such can't be left alone with their children for two minutes'."

In his new touring show, the perfectly-titled *Spoiler Alert*, Ed compares and contrasts the old-school child-rearing days with 21st century methods and suggests that there are different ways to learn how to be a mum or dad.

"I grew up in what I would call an aspirational household in that my parents bettered themselves over the course of my childhood. My mother was a radiographer and ended up a lecturer in radiography, while my dad was a sheet metal worker and went up to a supervisory role. I'd still say that you are expected to do a lot more parenting than our parents did and that's a weird thing because you tend to think that your parents are who you learnt parenting from. But you don't, really, it's more that you look around to see what's going on with other parents."

For the show, Ed extends his analysis on the culture of entitlement to look at areas where we could perhaps do with being spoiled a little bit more. "Where I think we're not acting spoiled enough is in the political arena. We have a tendency to accept what's happening and that's where we should be acting more entitled: we are literally entitled to the government we want. We're spoiled in all these little ways, but not spoiled enough."

As well as stories about his two young sons, Ed weaves in routines about running out of petrol in the most awkward place imaginable, helping rescue an injured

Byrne out – Ed brings his latest tour to Stafford and Birmingham



man in the Cairngorms, and the nation-dividing campaign and result of the EU referendum. His way of tackling Brexit is to draw an analogy with the time his son was determined to touch an electric fence with his dad trying to warn him of the dangers.

"I was telling the story of the electric fence for a while, and then suddenly it struck me that it was Brexit in microcosm. I don't want to alienate half of the population or maybe a third of my audience, but it works as an analogy whichever side you're on. The government told you not to do this and that it would be a terrible idea, but you said 'no, we want to do it anyway'. So now we're doing it and it's proving a terrible idea. I do think it's a fair analogy, but no doubt for some it will come across as me being a typical liberal elite Remoaner."

Spoiler Alert also continues a theme that he's tackled in previous shows, that of his gradual shift from being a working-class Dubliner to a fully paid-up rural-residing member of the middle classes. Where once he would do routines slating 4x4 owners, he is now the proud(ish) owner of such a vehicle. And in the poster for his tour, he brandishes other signifiers of social mobility: a bowtie and chainsaw. "It's one of two I own: that one is the smaller of the two," Ed remarks of his chainsaw rather than his neckwear. "I use it for firewood, both for my wood burning stove and also for the barbecue. The first time I used one I was fine, though I think I worried my parents

*I keep a tour diary
now of places
where the curries
are disappointing*

that I had bought a chainsaw." Having premiered *Spoiler Alert* at the Fringe and used the month of August to hone the show, Ed is happy. "Being on stage is enjoyable and this part of the writing process is enjoyable. The empty page though is a scary thing. On the first leg of the tour I'll do about an hour and 15 minutes, plus I'll have a support act. I keep a tour diary now of places where the curries are disappointing and where they are good and where audiences have been good before."

● For more entertainment news and reviews see *The Ticket* in your Express & Star every Friday.

Tips for the top The Amazons



We're delighted to now be headline act in Brum

THEY'RE starting their headline tour at Birmingham's Institute next Thursday, February 1.

And The Amazons couldn't be happier about that. Because in a former life and in a former band, they once played there as a blink-and-you'll-miss-them support act.

Frontman Matt Thomson and bandmates Elliot Briggs and Chris Alderton opened for The Mystery Jets back in 2012.

"That feels like a long time ago," says Matt, whose band enjoyed a top ten hit with their self-titled debut album in May.

"We landed a support slot with The Mystery Jets. It was us and Swim Deep on the bill. I only just caught

up with the Mystery Jets at a Christmas party at the end of last year. I told them they were great to us when we were supporting them. We had a really good time. So to go back to that same venue, but as the headline act, is really important to us. It's going to be great."

The Amazons formed in 2014 in Reading and were snapped up by Fiction Records in 2015. They recorded their debut album in 2016 and released it in May. It went straight in at number eight, cementing their status as one of Britain's most exciting new bands.

By then they had been included in the BBC's Sound of 2017 and MTV's Brand New 2017 lists. They were also named a band to listen to in 2017 by NME, The Independent and BBC Radio 1. This is the year when they must deliver on that promise.

Jonnn hopes his talk will be Atomic



Ned's Atomic Dustbin frontman Jonnn Penney has been thinking about writing his autobiography.

He's 50, he's got a couple of kids – and he wants to write down his stories before he forgets them.

The only trouble is he doesn't know where to start. So he's planning a special appearance at Wolverhampton Literature Festival tomorrow (Saturday) at the city's Slade Rooms from 8.45pm. He'll be with Ned's guitarist Ratt – playing songs, telling stories and answering questions.

Jonnn explains: "The thing is, I'm

too damn lazy to do it myself. I'm also frightened at the prospect of writing enough words to make a book. And also, as has been said, I'm very much a reactionary person and I need a nudge. I sat down and started writing this book and I couldn't remember. So we thought we'd do something where people can prompt me – where the fans can ask questions and jog my memory – then I'll be able to do it.

"Once the fans get me started, they transport me back to my flat in Lye where I'm hungover and it's early in the morning and I've just written a few lyrics. I'm a waffer, so I just need encouragement to get

me going. I'm not stupid enough to think there's a massive market out there for the memoirs of a singer from a lesser known indie band from England. But it's worth having it down somewhere."

Jonnn has played a huge number of gigs during his career, headlining festival stages, playing sell out gigs at Wolves Civic Hall and featuring on Top of the Pops. He will be fronting the Neds again at a sold out 02 Academy in Birmingham at the Love From Stourbridge gig with The Wonder Stuff on April 14, the first of two consecutive nights at the venue.

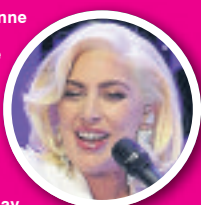
Dance, romance and murder on stage

Dance dominates over the next few days with Strictly's Anton de Beke and Erin Boag in action at the Symphony Hall on Saturday with dancers, singer Lance Ellington and the London Concert Orchestra. Then the Russian State Ballet of Siberia make their annual visit to Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre to present The Nutcracker (Sunday, matinee), Romeo and Juliet (Monday) and Swan Lake (Tuesday). Meanwhile, murder swap thriller Strangers on a Train is at the New Alexandra Theatre (Monday-Saturday) with John Middleton (Emmerdale), Christopher Harper (Coronation Street) and Hannah Tointon (Mr Selfridge). Carole King musical Beautiful returns to Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday and the romantic Brief Encounter opens at Birmingham Rep on Friday, February 2.

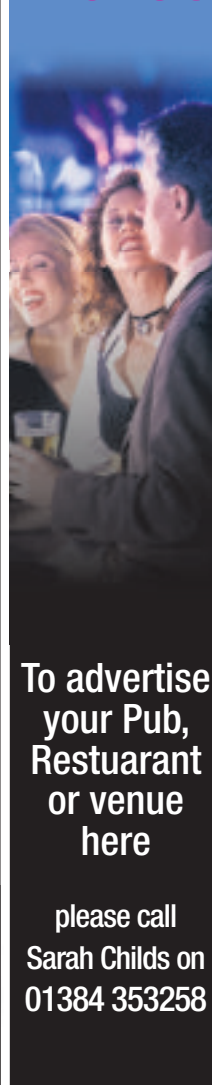
Gaga is Joanne for Arena dates

Lady Gaga brings her Joanne world tour to Birmingham with gigs at the city centre Arena on Wednesday and at the Genting Arena the following night.

Other key gigs include psychedelic rock at the Hare and Hounds in Kings Heath with Americans Wand on Monday and Moon Duo on Tuesday. Will Varley previews his Spirit of Minnie album at the 02 Institute on Tuesday, the same night Terry Bickers (House of Love/Levitaton) teams up with Pete Fij at Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton.



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Rob Beckett

All Together Now (BBC1, 7.15pm)
New series. Rob Beckett hosts the musical talent show with a twist, as a range of singers step on-stage for a chance to win a £50,000 cash prize. The judging panel takes the form of 'The 100', a large collective of music experts and performers from all over the UK led by Geri Horner. However, in this talent show, the key to success is encouraging the judges to sing along too, and the more panellists each singer manages to win over, the better their chances of proceeding to the grand final.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Tennis: Australian Open 2018. **2.30** Live Bowls: World Indoor Championships. Coverage of the open singles semi-finals. **4.30** Final Score. **5.25** BBC News. **5.35** Regional Programme. **5.40** And They're Off for Sport Relief.
6.25 **Pointless Celebrities.** Mark Steel, Marcus Brigstocke, Nicky Campbell, Rachel Burden, Liz Kershaw, DJ Nihal, Shaun Keaveny and Nemone take part in a radio-themed edition of the quiz.
7.15 **All Together Now.** New series. Rob Beckett hosts the musical talent show in which contestants must successfully encourage members of a 100-strong judging panel to sing along with them to win.
8.20 **Casualty.** Dylan struggles to keep his alcoholism under control, as staff on the ED deal with what is suspected to be a case of domestic abuse. Meanwhile, Ethan's first day as Clinical Lead fails to go according to plan, as he finds himself veering wildly from one disaster to another, and he starts to understand the real pressure of leading a team.
9.10 **BBC News:** Weather.
9.30 **Hard Sun.** Hicks uncovers the extent of Renko's investigation into the Alex Butler murder, and journalist Will Benedetti's connection to Hard Sun makes him the sprae killer's next target. When Blackwood publicly announces that only Fr Dennis can stop him killing again, the priest is immediately cast as a figure of public hate, and London becomes a city under siege. With chaos unfolding all around, Grace gives Daniel some shocking information about his father. Pre-apocalyptic thriller, starring Agyness Deyn.
10.30 **Match of the Day: FA Cup Highlights.** Gary Lineker presents action from the fourth-round ties, including Newport County v Tottenham Hotspur at Rodney Parade and Liverpool v West Bromwich Albion at Anfield; National Lottery Update.
12.00 The NFL Show. **12.30** Film: What Doesn't Kill You. (2008) **2.05** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.35** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.05** The Pets Factor. **7.30** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **7.45** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **8.00** The Denzingers. **8.30** Deadly Top 10. (R) **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Robot Wars. (R) **11.00** The Snow Wolf Family and Me. (R) **12.00** The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **1.00** A Vicar's Life. (R) **1.30** Film: The Diary of Anne Frank. (1959) **4.15** Italy's Invisible Cities. (R) **5.15** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **5.45** Tom Kerridge: Lose Weight for Good. (R) **6.15** **Hugh's Wild West.** Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall investigates efforts to bring beavers back to the Dorset-Devon border, and a swan herd at Abbotsbury Swannery rounds up his charges for a health check.
7.15 **A House Through Time.** David Olusoga follows the story of the Liverpool house residents from 1891 to 1945, including a family of saddlers who lived there for four decades and a docker with a secret. (R)
8.15 **Dad's Army.** Mainwaring and the platoon dress as firemen to take part in an initiative exercise, but soon find themselves tackling a real fire. Comedy, starring Arthur Lowe and Clive Dunn. (R)
8.45 **Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs.** Paul Merton travels into the secret heart of the Rough Bounds of Knoydart, by way of Loch nan Uimh, Loch Morar, Loch Nevis and Loch Arkalg.
9.15 **Qi XL.** Josh Widdicombe, Stephen K Amos and Gail Beaton join regular panellist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig in an extended edition of the unconventional quiz.
10.00 **Darcey Bussell: Dance Beyond Boundaries.** The former ballerina reveals how street dance group Boy Blue Entertainment and Canadian-based ice dancing collective Le Patin Libre are helping to revolutionise modern dance.
10.30 **Film: Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance).** (2014) Premiere. A faded movie star wrestles with a personal crisis as he tries to put on a disaster-afflicted Broadway play. Oscar-winning drama, with Michael Keaton and Edward Norton.
12.20 Bowls: World Indoor Championships Highlights. **1.20** **Film:** Girl with a Pearl Earring. (2003) **2.55** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Do! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.25** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **12.25** Countrywise. (R) **12.55** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Dancing on Ice. (R) **3.15** Catchphrase. (R) **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R)
6.00 **Regional Programme;** Weather.
6.05 **ITV News;** Weather.
6.20 **New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates another round of viewer-submitted comedy clips, including a hoverboard destroying an office, and a man falling through a casino ceiling.
6.45 **Take Me Out.** A warehouse worker from Wolverhampton and a musician from Leicester are among the men seeking the approval of Paddy McGuinness's panel of 30 single ladies.
8.00 **The Voice UK.** The fourth round of Blind Auditions arrives, as Emma Willis ushers another selection of would-be stars onto the stage to have their skills appraised. As ever, coaches Jennifer Hudson, Tom Jones, Will.i.am and Olly Murs are all seated with their backs to the contestants, meaning they must judge each performer's skill based solely on the power of their voice. Any of the would-be stars who are ultimately to join a coach's team will be in with a chance of eventually claiming a record deal with Polydor.
9.30 **Through the Keyhole.** Stephen Mulhern, Louis Walsh and Rochelle Humes form the panel as Keith Lemon challenges them to guess the mystery owners of three more celebrity homes.
10.30 **ITV News;** Weather.
10.45 **Film: Jaws: The Revenge.** (1987) The remaining members of the Brody family are terrorised by a bloodthirsty great white shark in the Bahamas. Thriller sequel, starring Michael Caine, Lorraine Gary and Lance Guest.
12.15 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.40** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **7.05** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** The King of Queens. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.55** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** The Simpsons. (R) **12.55** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun. (R) **4.30** A Place in the Sun. (R) **5.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R)
6.30 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Great Canal Journeys.** Timothy West and Prunella Scales explore the Marne-Rhine Canal. Last in the series. (R)
8.00 **Village of the Year.** Archaeologist Alex Langlands, garden designer Juliet Sargeant and craft expert Patrick Grant are called on to decide which five villages from this week's heats should claim a place in the grand final. Plus, Penelope Keith hears more from the five contenders in the South East Zone.
9.00 **Holocaust: The Revenge Plot.** Documentary, making use of previously undisclosed recordings and candid interviews to tell the story of the Avengers, a secret organisation of Holocaust survivors who came up with a brutal plot in 1946 to seek vengeance on behalf of the six million Jews killed by Hitler and the Nazis. In the dying days of the Second World War, "warrior-poet" Abba Kovner came to the conclusion that the prosecution of a handful of Nazis would not amount to justice, and instead claimed only "an eye for an eye" could possibly redress the balance. With the help of a band of like-minded individuals, Kovner planned to murder six million Germans by infiltrating cities and poisoning water supplies. This film also showcases a clandestine recording, made in 1985 at the dying Kovner's request, that identifies all the leading conspirators and how they carried out their operations.
10.00 **Film: The Monuments Men.** (2014) Fact-based drama, directed by and starring George Clooney.
12.20 **Film:** Snake Eyes. (1998) **2.00** The Last Leg. (R) **2.55** Hollyoaks. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.10** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.45** Funniest Fails, Falls & Flops. (R) **11.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.05** The A-Team. (R) **2.05** The A-Team. (R) **3.00** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **4.00** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.00** Rich House, Poor House. (R)
6.00 **The Wonderful World of Puppies.** The development of puppies' senses. The dalmatian litter has reached six weeks old. As a breed they are susceptible to deafness, so they are taken for to the vet for a crucial hearing test. A new litter of golden doodles reveal how puppy eyesight develops week by week, cameras track the progress of a springer spaniel as he begins training to become a mountain search-and-rescue dog, and the labrador puppies reach six weeks old – time to find out if they have the senses and skills to pass their guide dog test.
7.00 **Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups.** Joe Pasquale revisits more celebrity pranks, including the time Justin Bieber's elaborate trick for Taylor Swift, and incognito meet-and-greets with Michael Buble and Mark Hamill.
8.00 **Blind Date.** Paul O'Grady plays matchmaker for a reformed "bad-boy" and a nightclub hostess, and past couples Jonathan and Kelly, and Joanna and David return to dish the dirt on their dates.
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.05 **Football on 5: The Championship.** Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games, including Bristol City v Queens Park Rangers, and Ipswich Town v Wolverhampton Wanderers.
10.00 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Catching up with the celebrities as they react to Friday night's double eviction, revealing how the departure of two housemates has affected the remaining contestants.
11.05 **The X-Files.** Mulder and Scully uncover a medical laboratory where extreme genetic experimentation has been going on for decades, breeding subjects who possess unexpected and dangerous powers. (R)
12.00 Britain's Greatest Brides. **12.10** SuperCasino. **3.10** **Film:** Enemies Closer. (2013) **4.30** Access. **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.35** House Busters. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Children of the Holocaust **8.00** Surviving the Holocaust – Freddie Knoller's War **9.00** Spiral **10.55** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.05** The Easybeats to AC/DC: The Story of Aussie Rock **1.05** New York Rock at the BBC **2.05** Joy of the Guitar Riff **3.05** Close
ITV2
11.30 Take Me Out **12.45** You've Been Framed! **Gold 1.10** Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **2.10** FYI Daily **2.15** Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **3.25** Film: The Flintstones (1994) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30** Film: The Flintstones (1994) **5.10** Film: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **6.15** FYI Daily **6.20** Film: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **9.00** Film: Fast & Furious 5 (2011) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** Film: Fast & Furious 5 (2011) **11.35** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.35** Ibiza Weekender **2.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen
ITV3
1.50 Rosemary & Thyme **2.55** Film: Colombo: Sex and the Married Detective (1989) **4.55** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Foyle's War **1.00** On the Buses **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
1.30 ITV Racing: Live from Cheltenham. Coverage of Festival of Trials Day **1.00** Film: Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **5.00** FYI Daily **5.05** Film: Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **6.05** Storage Wars **7.00** Darts: The Masters Live. Coverage of day two from Milton Keynes. **11.00** Film: Assault on Precinct 13 (2005) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10** Film: Assault on Precinct 13 (2005) **1.10** Car Crash Global: Caught on Camera **2.10** The Protectors **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
11.40 Film: Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009) **1.30** Film: Toy Story That Time Forgot (2014) **2.00** The Goldbergs **4.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: The Inbetweeners Movie (2011) **11.00** Gogglebox **12.00** Naked Attraction **1.10** Rude Tube **2.15** Gogglebox **3.10** Naked Attraction **4.05** The Goldbergs **4.30** How I Met Your Mother **5.15** Rude(ish) Tube
Film4
11.00 Courage Mountain (1990) **1.00** Stuart Little 2 (2002) **2.35** Patton (1970) **5.50** Avatar (2009) **9.00** Exodus: Gods and Kings (2014) **11.55** The Midnight Meat Train (2008) **2.00** Series 7: The Contenders (2001) **3.55** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

The Town, Channel 5, 12.05am

A thief takes a bank manager hostage while he and his gang make their getaway, only to later learn she lives in the same neighbourhood as him. As FBI agents close in, he tries to befriend her to make sure she cannot identify him, but as he falls in love with her, he considers changing his ways - risking the fury of his unstable partner in crime. Drama, directed by and starring Ben Affleck. With Rebecca Hall and Jeremy Renner. (2010)

TUESDAY

The Wrong Nanny, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Premiere. Stella hires a nanny to take care of her twin boys, only to find out the woman she hired is her daughter that she gave up for adoption. Thriller, starring Madison Adams. (2017)

WEDNESDAY

The Stranger Inside, Channel 5, 3.20pm

Premiere. A woman and her husband who are trying to have a baby become the target of their fertility doctor. Thriller, starring Sofia Milos. (2016)



The Town, Monday, Channel 5, 12.05am

THURSDAY

Escaping Dad, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman goes on the run with her children to escape an abusive husband. But he is the District Attorney and uses his legal connections to put out an amber alert on his missing family. Thriller, starring Sunny Mabrey, Jason Wiles, Grace Van Dien and Rick Overton. (2017)

FRIDAY

My Daughter Is Innocent, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Two teenage girls are accused of a brutal murder and one mother is determined to prove her daughter's innocence. However, all may not be as it seems. Thriller, starring Victoria Pratt. (2017)

Calvary, BBC2, 11.05pm

A priest tries to put his community's affairs in order as he waits for a meeting with a man who has vowed to kill him. Drama, starring Brendan Gleeson, Chris O'Dowd, Kelly Reilly, Aidan Gillen and Dylan Moran. (2014)

Matilda looks to connect the dots in thrilling new series

Sometimes, the scariest dramas aren't the goriest or the ones that make you jump, but the subtle stories that rely on mood and a slowly building sense of disquiet that creeps up on you.

That's what writer Kris Mrksa is aiming to do with his new six-part series *Requiem*, which is partly inspired by such classic psychological horrors as *The Innocents*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *Don't Look Now*.

Or as actress Lydia Wilson, who plays the main character Matilda Gray, puts it when asked what drew her to the role: "What I really liked was the fact that it was a psychological drama, but in a sneaky way. Matilda is a girl from London in Converse trainers, whose life suddenly spirals into this giant mystery."

"Requiem starts off with the banality of everyday London, and then it suddenly goes, 'Woah!'"

Although she may dress like an ordinary twenty-something, the first episode makes it clear that there is

something unusual about Matilda - she's a successful cellist. In fact, she about to head off to New York to begin a concert tour when her mother Janice (Joanna Scanlon) takes her own life.

As far as Matilda is concerned, there were no hints that her mum was suicidal. To make sense of the tragedy, she goes through a box that was on Janice's bed, and finds it contains items relating to Carys Howell, a young girl who went missing from a small Welsh village more than 20 years ago.

In a bid to discover if there's a link between her mother's death and the toddler's disappearance, Matilda and her loyal accompanist Hal (Joel Fry) set off for Penllynth.

Lydia can understand why Matilda needs to get to the bottom of Janice's suicide. "That's the key relationship in the whole drama. Like a lot of single-parent families, they're friends, as well as a mother, and a daughter. Matilda is filled with grief about Janice's suicide."

"She is now at a crossroads in her

life. She can either fall apart or she could channel her sadness into an obsessive search for her true identity. That's a much more bearable way of dealing with her grief."

However, it seems Matilda may not be only one grieving as she arrives in Penllynth on the day that the funeral of Ewan Dean, a wealthy local landowner who died in mysterious circumstances, is being held.

Ewan's Australian nephew Nick (James Frecheville), who has inherited the estate, invites the musicians to stay at Dean House, which Matilda recognises from a photo in a mother's box. But could there be another reason why the property seems so familiar - and increasingly sinister?

Lydia suspects viewers will want to keep tuning into *Requiem*, which will be shown internationally by Netflix, to find out. "I hope audiences will fall in love with this world and want to keep coming back to it. I hope they will feel like we did when we made it - intrigued by this strange thing that doesn't look like anything else."



Lydia Wilson stars in *Requiem*, Friday, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Winterwatch 2018

BBC2, 9pm

The team returns to the National Trust's Sherborne Park Estate in the heart of the Cotswold countryside, and although this is the third consecutive season they have spent here, the familiar surroundings still hold many surprises. Michaela Strachan and Chris Packham are based at the cosy barn on the estate, bringing updates from the remote cameras rigged throughout Gloucestershire, and Martin Hughes-Games continues his investigations into some of the harder-to-find animal characters, including trout, lesser horseshoe bats, red kites and skylarks. Meanwhile, Gillian Burke is on the road once more, coming live from the island of Islay just off the west coast of Scotland. This is a special place in the winter - it's unique position in relation to the jetstream makes it a haven for all kinds of wildlife, including otters and golden eagles.

TUESDAY

Can You Rebuild My Brain?

Channel 4, 10pm

When Lotje Soderland was 34, her brain was permanently damaged by a stroke that almost killed her. It fundamentally changed her and

how she saw the world but it also left her fascinated with the science that saved her life. Cameras follow Lotje as she meets neuroscience pioneers - scientists who are using the latest knowledge to repair 'broken' brains and developing ground-breaking treatments for everything from Parkinson's and Alzheimer's to autism. Lotje examines the risks as well as the rewards associated with fixing something experts don't yet fully understand.

WEDNESDAY

The Truth About Getting Fit

BBC1, 8pm

Michael Mosley and a team of scientists investigate the some of the easiest and most effective ways to get the biggest benefits of exercise. In Sheffield, the team test whether walking 10,000 steps a day is more effective than doing short 10 minute brisk walks, and in London, Michael installs a bike in an office to test whether workers can get fit by doing just two minutes of intense exercise a week. Elsewhere in the programme, Michael also joins strength

experts in Glasgow to do a 6 week experiment, comparing the effects of heavy and light weights for building muscle.

THURSDAY

Death Row 2018 with Trevor McDonald

ITV, 9pm

Five years on from his harrowing fortnight at the maximum-security Indiana State Prison, Sir Trevor McDonald returns to meet the new arrivals on death row as well as some familiar faces. He is reunited with Ronald Sanford, who killed two elderly women at the age of 13. Sanford was incarcerated at 15 years old and although he has spent the last two decades educating himself, the reality is that he will most likely end his life here. The prisoner opens up about the disturbing childhood that,

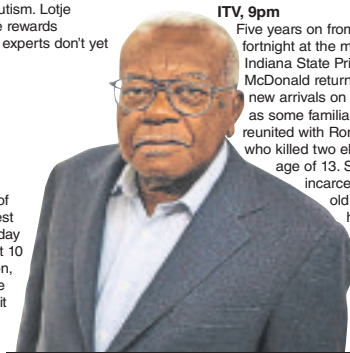
he claims, made him able to commit such heinous acts. However, another inmate, the remorseless William Clyde Gibson, from South Indiana, who was sentenced to death in June 2014 for killing and mutilating three women, disagrees. 'Everybody thinks when you do the type of stuff I did, people automatically think it's because you had a bad childhood,' he says. 'I had a perfectly normal childhood.'

FRIDAY

Nigel Slater's Middle East

BBC2, 9pm

Some countries seem to attract more celebrity chefs on culinary adventures than others - Italy has definitely played host to more than its fair share of TV cooks. But in this new series, Nigel Slater is going off the beaten track as he tours the Middle East, which is home to some of the oldest and grandest cuisines in the world. His journey begins in the Lebanon, where he learns how the country's dishes are influenced by its position on the Mediterranean. As he travels from Beirut to the Beqaa Valley, close to the Syrian border, eating with local families and home cooks, he learns more about the people's resilience in the face of decades of war, and how that is reflected in their pride in their culture and cuisine.



Death Row 2018 with Trevor McDonald, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

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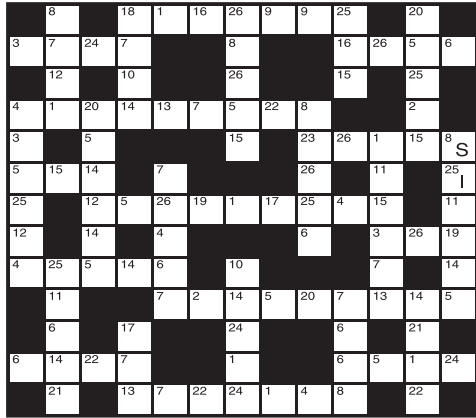
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BRAIN GYM

No.464

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	C	M	G	R	Y	Q	V	O	K	S	J	A	I
14	P	T	X	E	N	Z	F	U	L	H	W	D	B

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

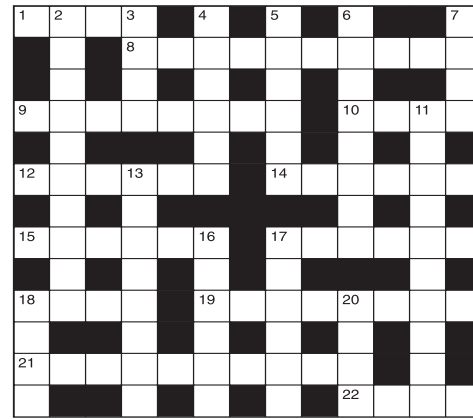
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Creatures put in a trap, escaped (4)
8. Official note in which half the comments can't be matched (10)
9. Is apprehensive about the plumage (8)
10. A number of letters for a job (4)
12. The light touch of an oarsman (6)
14. Trim the Christmas tree (6)
15. The medicine-man hides the pictures (6)
17. Valuing scrap metal inside (6)
18. Insect with reversed barb (4)
19. It's cheap to supply a literary pot-pourri (8)
21. Set and convert into a cotton field (10)
22. After this the board will make a piece of furniture (4)

Down

2. Footman needs a trip for a change (10)
3. A little science to upset the Caledonian (4)
4. Current measure makes mother return to father in Paris! (6)
5. Maledictions producing sure confusion in the Civil Service (6)
6. To cause depression I'd upset the alcohol (8)
7. The others don't work (4)
11. It will take only a minute to go all round this kind of shop (6-4)
13. Never too disturbed to produce a harmonic (8)
16. Seem to be an equal, we hear (6)
17. Rough woodwork for the yokel (6)
18. Substitutes stop in front of these (4)
20. Places providing refreshment in opposite directions (4)



Quick Clues:

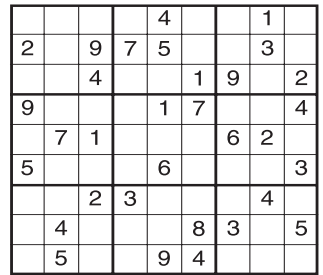
Across

1. Pitch (4)
8. Volcanic tremor (10)
9. Sham (8)
10. Yawn (4)
12. Set fire to (6)
14. Golf club (6)
15. Cherish (6)
17. Beer-maker (6)
18. Russian ruler (4)
19. Contemplate (8)
21. Frustrate (10)
22. So be it (4)

Down

2. Scandalous (10)
3. Despatched (4)
4. Fruit (6)
5. Protect (6)
6. Bog (8)
7. Measure (4)
11. Priority (10)
13. Gap (8)
16. Formula (6)
17. Brigand (6)
18. Neat (4)
20. Jot (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3	1	2	7	8	6	4	5	9
8	4	6	9	3	5	1	7	2
7	9	5	2	4	1	3	8	6
4	3	1	6	7	8	9	2	5
6	8	9	3	5	2	7	1	4
2	5	7	4	1	9	6	3	8
5	2	3	1	9	4	8	6	7
1	6	4	8	2	7	5	9	3
9	7	8	5	6	3	2	4	1

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Omega; 8 Outcast; 9 Bring to; 10 An end; 12 Essentials; 15 At half-mast; 18 Keats; 19 Tellers; 21 Fortune; 22 Serve.
Down: 1 Double talk; 2 Remit; 3 Gang; 4 Morose; 5 Atlantis; 6 Cameras; 11 Distressed; 13 Sells out; 14 Theatre; 16 Matter; 17 Heart; 20 Lose. QUICK - Across: 7 Barge; 8 Observe; 9 Exploit; 10 Alter; 12 Disrespect; 15 Omniscient; 18 Still; 19 Fervour; 21 Cleaner; 22 Round.
Down: 1 Obsequious; 2 Erupt; 3 Zero; 4 Porter; 5 Assassin; 6 Written; 11 Retrograde; 13 Insolent; 14 Infidel; 16 Inform; 17 Vogue; 20 Rare.

Quiz

1. What is the name of the sequel to Milton's Paradise Lost?
2. Which avant-garde New York rock group featured Lou Reed and John Cale?
3. Whose vice-president was Richard Nixon?
4. Of which group of islands is Espiritu Santo the largest?
5. What position would we call that of the Taoiseach?
6. Which British tennis player won the 1994 Korean Open?
7. By what name do we know the spider Latrodectus mactans?
8. Who is the current UK Poet Laureate?
9. Which former Bishop of London has become a Roman Catholic priest?
10. In which African country is Abuja?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Old Vic; 2 Karl Marx; 3 John Dos Passos; 4 Dorchester; 5 JRR Tolkien; 6 Nereids or nereides; 7 Honey-bee poison; 8 Pontius Pilate; 9 Textured vegetable protein; 10 1975.

Niner: FILAMENTS

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

967178
531168
4629

gives a fuel,
gives a type of fuel,
gives a power.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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be able
to trust the
ads you see.

If an ad is wrong,
the ASA is here to put it right.

ASA.org.uk

Advertising Standards Authority

ADVERTISEMENTS CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

- Midland News Association Limited** All publications in this group are published by the Midland News Association Limited, registered office Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES ('the Company') and this is the address to which any notices should be sent.
- Acceptance** The Company will only accept advertising on these standard terms and no other contract terms or conditions will apply other than those which are implied by statute and cannot lawfully be excluded. In particular the Company will not accept advertising on the basis of advertiser's terms and conditions.
- Content of Advertisements** All advertisements must be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice and all other codes under the general supervision of the Advertising Standards Authority. Advertisements must comply with the requirements of all current legislation including but not limited to the following:- All advertisements must clearly differentiate between trade and private advertising as required by the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order 1977. Advertisements offering credit or hire facilities must comply with the Consumer Credit (Advertisement) Regulations 1980. All descriptions of goods must be accurate and in no way infringe the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. Advertisements must not contain any material which is defamatory. You must have permission to use any material contained in your advertisement and must not infringe the copyright moral rights or any other right of any third party. The Company reserves the right to refuse to carry any advertisement or to require amendment of any advertisement in its absolute discretion.
- Appearance of Advertisements** Whilst the Company makes every effort to comply with requests, publication on a particular date or in a particular position cannot be guaranteed. The Company reserves the right to alter, suspend, cancel or reject an advertisement at its discretion even after the same has been accepted for publication without being liable to compensate you. You will not be charged for any advertisement which does not appear. If only a part of a series of advertisements appears you will only be charged for the advertisements in the series which actually appear. The Company does not guarantee the publication or extent of supporting editorial and your obligation to pay for advertising will not under any circumstances be dependent upon the appearance or content of editorial. No liability will be accepted for non-appearance of editorial. The Company does not guarantee that advertising will not appear for similar or the same subject matter to your advertisement and no liability shall be accepted as a result of such advertising appearing. It is the advertiser's responsibility to provide any amended copy, whether by electronic or other format, and the Company does not guarantee that it will be able to or will agree to modify, amend or alter any file or copy supplied to it.
- Liability** The Company's liability for any loss or damage caused by any error or omission in the advertisement or any other breach of contract shall not in any circumstances exceed a full refund of any price paid by the advertiser to the Company for the publication of the advertisement or the cost of a further or corrective advertisement of the same type as that which originally appeared. Where a series of advertisements is booked the Company's liability shall not in any circumstances exceed the value of the first advertisement in the series. In the event of any error, misprint or omission in the publication of the advertisement the Company will either re-publish the advertisement or the relevant parts of the advertisement or make a reasonable refund of or adjustment to the cost of the advertisement. If the error does not materially detract from the advertisement then no re-publication, refund or adjustment will be made. It is the advertiser's responsibility to check the content of advertisements and the Company will not accept any liability for loss or damage, or obligation to re-publish or make a refund or adjustment, arising from re-publication of an advertisement containing an error, misprint or omission which has not been identified by the advertiser after first publication.
- Box numbers** The Company accepts no liability for loss or damage caused by delay in forwarding or omission to forward to the advertiser replies to Box Numbers. Box Numbers must not be used for sending goods, distributing circulars or communications from agents. The Company reserves the right to open and inspect all replies to Box Number and to destroy goods, circulars or communications from agents which are discovered during an inspection.
- Inspection** The Company shall be entitled at any time to inspect any goods or services advertised and may decline to carry further advertising if such inspection is not permitted or if in the Company's opinion the provision of further advertising facilities is not appropriate in view of the nature or quality of the goods or services.
- Indemnity** The advertiser, including any advertising agency involved in placing any advertisement, warrants that it has permission to use for publication by electronic and printed means all material which is included in the advertisement. The advertiser and any advertising agency involved in placing any advertisement agree to indemnify the Company in respect of all charges, costs, claims or damage arising out of the publication of the advertisement, whether the same result from actual or threatened legal action or from some other cause.
- Cancellation** On a request for cancellation or amendment of a classified advertisement being accepted, you will be given a cancellation or amendment number which must be quoted in all subsequent correspondence. Payment of the originally agreed price will be required in full for any advertisement in relation to which the advertiser is unable to supply a valid cancellation or amendment number. Cancellation can only be accepted if the Company is notified of the cancellation by no later than the following deadlines:-
Lineage, Semi Display - By no later than 6.30pm on the working day prior to publication. Advertisements to appear on Monday must be cancelled by 10 am on the preceding Saturday
Classified Display - By no later than 24 hours before the date of publication
Colour/Features - By no later than 10 clear days before the date of publication
To cancel Lineage, Semi Display and Classified Display advertisements please telephone 01902 317878. To cancel Colour/Features advertisements please speak to the Representative through whom the advertisement was booked.
- Rates** Advertising rates are as laid out in the Company's current rate card which is available on request from the Company's offices. The rates may be varied from time to time in the Company's absolute discretion and without prior notification of the intended variation. The revised rate will be charged for any advertising ordered after the date of variation. All gross advertising rates except classified lineage and semi-display are subject to a 0.1% Advertising Standards Board of Finance levy payable by advertisers to help finance the self-regulatory system administered by the Advertising Standards Authority.
- Payment** The Company reserves the right to require pre-payment as a condition of any advertisement being published. Where pre-payment is not required unless different credit terms have been agreed with the advertiser in writing payment must be made within 14 days of the date of issue of the Company's invoice. An additional £2.00 booking charge will be payable if the invoice is not paid in full within this 14 day period. Any additional credit facilities which are offered are at the Company's absolute discretion. The advertiser's liability shall be for the full amount of all advertising ordered and shall not be limited to the amount of any credit limit which the Company may impose. Payment may be made by [method] cash, cheque or credit/debit card. The advertiser's obligation to pay for other items on an account shall not be affected by the existence of any query over an individual item within that account.
- Data Protection Act** The advertiser's details will be retained by the Company for the purposes of administering our accounts records and so that the Company may notify the advertiser of future advertising opportunities which may be of interest to you. By placing advertising with the Company the advertiser agrees to your details being used for this purpose.
- Applicable Law** These conditions of acceptance shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the law of England and Wales.

To advertise your business and reach more than 46,000 potential customers...

1

Call us on...
01902 319590

2

E-mail us at...
mark.moore@expressandstar.co.uk

3

Post to...
**Mark Moore, Halesowen Chronicle, Black Country
House, Rounds Green Road, Oldbury B69 2DG**

Classified Ads

Buy Local, Sell Local

Index

- 1 Family
- 2 Leisure Time
- 3 Home & Services
- 4 Pets & Animals
- 5 Business & Farming
- 6 Property
- 7 Jobs
- 8 Motoring
- 9 Local Information
- 10 Personals

Free Ads

IT'S FREE IT'S EASY

For items up to **£250**

VISIT:

bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

Simply press the free ad icon.
Sorry, no pets, guns or livestock.
Private advertisers only.

Place a paid for advert

By Phone 01902 317878

8.30am - 5.30pm Mon - Fri.
Closed Sat/Sun and Bank Holidays

Online
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

In person

At your local Express & Star Office.
Cancel/amend, call before 3.00pm
Monday - Friday for the next day's
advertisement or also before 3.00pm
Friday for Monday's advertisement.

Funeral Directors

N.E. DOWNING
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Independent family run Funeral Directors

24 hour service
Halesowen
0121 422 2794

www.nedowning.co.uk

1

Family

Elderly & Disabled

ACORN STAIRLIFT
For private sale suits straight staircase only £985.00.

Includes delivery and fitting by a trained Acorn installer and a 3 month full warranty.

Contact 0800 073 9793 quoting the reference 228735.

Subject to survey

BREEZY MOONLITE wheelchair, foldable, brakes, excellent condition, used twice, £220.
01384 897094.

WREKIN STAIRLIFTS reconditioned lifts from £799. New available. 01952 405397/07897 273617

2

Leisure Time

Bikes

SARACEN ZEN Mens bike, excellent condition £100 ono. Halford Ladies bike, excellent condition. £50 ono 01902 546512.

Caravans Wanted

All Caravans Wanted
Any Age or Condition
*CASH * WAITING*
Immediate collection
Call Bill on 07825 325 913

Caravans/Motorhomes



Caravans from £10,995
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12 months owner season! Amazing facilities, funding options available from 10% deposit (T&C's apply)
Call Claran on 07542456117 or email
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holidays

Travel Abroad

READERS ARE REMINDED to check with any Advertiser that their holiday costs are fully covered by a recognised bonding or insurance scheme.

Jumble Sales / Fetes

BRIC-A-BRAC FAIR
Sunday, 28th January
Next Sale: February 11th
KINVER COMMUNITY CENTRE, DY7 6ER
10.30am - 4pm
Tel: 01384 894464

Sports & Leisure

DAVINA MCCALL exercise bike, as new, unused, £90 o.n.o. Contact Joanne on 01902 861871.

Free Ads

IT'S FREE, IT'S EASY
For items up to £250.

Online at
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

RALPH LAUREN Ski jackets x 2, £25 each, also salopettes, small mens. £10 each.
01902 374262.

3

Home & Services

In Your Garden

C B SHEDS & FENCING

We supply & fit. Free quotes.
Call: 01922 720270
We also supply sleepers and decking

Items For Sale

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED That the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

Items Wanted

WANTED
VINTAGE TAMIYA REMOTE CONTROL MODELS

Also any old radio controlled models in any condition, Mardave, Kyocho, Traxxas, HPI Team Associated, Schumacher

Big or small collections bought.
07568 585075 or
0121 532 2544.

CARAVAN FOR SALE

BARMOUTH BAY HOLIDAY PARK
TAL-Y-BONT, NICE POSITION,
ELEVATED PLOT, SEA AND
MOUNTAIN VIEWS

£35,995 o.n.o. INC SITE FEE TO
MARCH 2019

TEL 07962 125294

A BEST CASH PRICE



FOR ALL RAILWAY COLLECTIONS
Any gauge or age

Hornby/Bachmann/Bowmans/Roundhouse/Graham/Farsh/any live steam. Also Die Cast, Corgi, Dinky, Spot On.
01384 636219/07891 713547
thetrainmaster67@hotmail.com



READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.
WANTED Push lawnmower, Quak-cast or similar.
01302 787437.

Loans

READERS ARE REMINDED that they may require professional advice before entering into obligations.

specialists at your service

Aerials

AA DIGITAL AERIALS
AERIALS FITTED FROM £79.99
01902 858191 • 01384 429166
01543 439095 • 01922 716029

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!



"I am very pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising Contract"

Steve -
AA Digital Aerials

For great business results call
01902 319 191

Classified Ads
Brought to you by Express & Star

Alarms/Security

PREMIER ALARMS

Supplied and Fitted £249
Servicing and Repairs
12 Months Warranty
All areas covered
All quotes beaten!
Call: 0121 601 9791

Bathrooms

CHANGING ROOMS
IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING YOUR HOME
enquiries@changingrooms.org.uk
Is bathing becoming difficult?
Let us make life easier
Easy Access/ Wet Room Specialists
Showroom at 47A Kent Street, Dudley
01902 670426

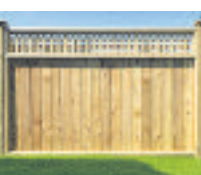
Building Services

G & D BUILDERS

Over 35 years exp
All aspects of building work
Extensions, loft conversions, roofing, driveways & landscaping.
All work guaranteed
07837 994465 / 01902 579592

Fencing

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!



"I am extremely happy with the service I get from my Express & Star Classified Sales Representatives and would recommend them to anyone! They have done a very professional job with my website so I get online enquiries as well now."

Michael-
Portway Fencing

For great business results call
01902 319 191

Classified Ads
Brought to you by Express & Star

PORTWAY FENCING

SPECIAL OFFER
10 Bays of quality fencing, concrete posts, gravel boards **£695**
Heavy duty panels supplied & fitted.
0121 531 5250 / 07866 137 656
Mon - Fri 8am - 4.30pm
Sat 8am - 12noon
83 Portway Rd, W'bury
DELIVERY AVAILABLE
www.portwayfencing.co.uk

Gas Fitting

READERS ARE ADVISED To check that anyone carrying out any Gas work is Gas Safe Registered. It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

Gardening Services



Express & Star

LANDSCAPE GARDENERS!

CLAIM YOUR FREE ADVERT
(T&Cs Apply)

Call Claire Smith: 01902 319661
claire.smith@expressandstar.co.uk

House Clearances

A ABSOLUTE BEST cash price paid for house clearances and bereavements. Also removals undertaken. 07852 172641 / 07710 360327 / 01902 534021

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Clean and Reliable, All Work Undertaken All Areas. Call 0121 567 5919 / 07977 262943.

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CALL DEAN NOW: For all your Removal needs. 07429 453209 / 01902 830870 / 01384 940260.

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12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
LOCAL OR DISTANCE. FULLY INSURED.
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Flat Roofing, Tiling, Roof Repairs, Fascias and Gutters.
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www.mgroofingwestmidlands.co.uk

Rubbish Removal

LETS TALK RUBBISH No Skips Needed Load/Remove any Waste, House Clearance. 07969 628382

Skip Hire

Grinsells Skip Hire LTD
Mini, Midi, Maxi, Large Skips.
Monday to Friday.
Saturday half day.
0121 555 6060

4

Pets & Animals

Equestrian Corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies have the required Passport information.

Guns & Dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

Pets Corner

CHINESE CRESTED hairless cross puppies, wormed to date, microchipped and health checked, Mum Chinese crested Hairless, Dad is Chihuahua, both parents can be seen. £350. 07859 018335.

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer.

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midlands News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

5

Business & Farming

Business Opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering into any obligations.

6

Property

Flats for sale

GROUND FLOOR

APARTMENT

Two bedroom,

Situated in the village of Penn.

Large parking area.

Drastically reduced for quick sale.

£96,000 ono.

01902 331155.

Accommodation To Let

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

A PREMISES SINGLE ROOM in a Shared house, Netherton. £85 p.w. inc. bills. No DSS. 2 weeks deposit. 07940 116130.

RECENTLY REFURBISHED 1 and 2 bed flats, Netherton / Dudley, close to Merry Hill, DSS welcome. 01562 885668 or 07831 200692.

Overseas Property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

Properties Wanted

We buy houses
Sell your house fast

- avoid repossession
- behind on payments
- job relocation
- unwanted inheritance
- What more -
- we buy in any condition
- No estate agent fees
- We pay all your legal fees

ACT NOW!

Contact us on:
07996 801219 / 07988 882090

Yes! HOMEBUYERS
THE EASY WAY TO SELL YOUR HOUSE

We Buy Houses For Cash

Free Valuation? Yes! No Fees? Yes! Any Location? Yes!
Fast Sale? Yes! Any House? Yes! Any Condition? Yes!

Get your FREE, instant cash offer today!

Call 0121 663 1403
or text "Cash" to 66777 yeshomebuyers.com

7
Jobs

**Employment
Wanted**

EXPERIENCED BRICK LAYER
requires employment, any type of
brick work. 07341 021774.

Full Time General

Full Time General

**JUNIOR ENGINEER(S)
SENIOR ENGINEER(S) &
ELECTRICIAN(S)**

We have opportunities within our company for all the
above roles.

Full clean driving licence and any Roller Shutter, Fire
Doors or Auto Door experience beneficial but not
essential as training provided.

Please send CV's to:
Mr B Taylor at RINGS SECURITY SHUTTERS & GATES LTD
9c Gainsborough Trading Estate, Rufford Road,
Stourbridge DY9 7ND

HALESOWEN BID
WE ARE RECRUITING
FOR THE FULL TIME POSITION OF:
**TOWN CENTRE
MANAGER**

THE ROLE WILL REQUIRE SKILLS IN:

Project Management | Liaison With Local Businesses
Creation of Partnerships & Business Networks

Based in Halesowen | Salary up to **£30,000 p.a**

TO APPLY, PLEASE SEND A CV AND COVERING LETTER TO:
info@halesowenbid.co.uk
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:
www.halesowenbid.co.uk

**MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
JOBSDAY**

Every Thursday our special jobs
section is packed with the week's
latest vacancies.

jobs.expressandstar.com

Express & Star

PRESTIGE

**MERCEDES E350 CDI SE
AUTO COUPE**

2009, panoramic glass sunroof,
comand sat nav, memory
package, 17ins alloys, 6 disc
CD/ DVD changer, 130k with
FSH.
Engine needs attention.
Hence price **£4,950 ono.**
07836 204450 /
deolsuk@hotmail.co.uk



MINI COOPER
2005, 63,600 miles, silver, part
leather interior, panoramic
electric roof, MoT November
2018, 6 disc CD.
£1,800 ono.
01902 657460.



PEUGEOT 207 1.4
58 reg, 82k miles, diesel, two
lady owners, full service history,
12 months MoT, no advisories,
superb condition.
£2,250 ono.
07977 39497.



RENAULT TWINGO PZAZ
2011, 17,400 miles, fsh, abs,
electric windows, electric
mirrors, MoT, central locking,
pas, CD, very good condition.
£2,499 ono.
07879 403302.

Cars Under £1500



FORD FOCUS 1.6 ZETEC
2002, long MoT, 53k, E/W, CD,
immaculate inside and out.
First to see will buy.
£595.
07791 113080.

DIESEL

FORD FOCUS ESTATE

56 reg, diesel, 10 months MoT,
good runner,
£300.
07414 995878.



**VOLKSWAGEN POLO
TWIST**
Diesel, 04 reg, 60MPG. 12
months MoT, one family owner,
80k miles. Lovely condition.
£950
07848 820177.

Classic Cars

WANTED, CLASSIC Car. Private
cash buyer. Any condition, anything
considered.
01630 652993 or 07773 462797.

Scrap Vehicles

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded
that it is an offence under the Scrap
Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy
scrap cars/metal for cash.

**ABC AUTO SALVAGE
WANTED URGENT**
Scrap & MOT Failures Best
Prices Paid ELV Registered
Spares Always Available
0121 557 0800 or
0121 557 0400.
Oldbury Area.

Vehicles Wanted

WANTED
CLASSIC CAR

Triumph, MG, Mercedes etc,
running or not, anything
considered. Cash paid.

Telephone Ron

07424 399776.

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best
price for your unwanted cars/vans.
07903 549849, buyer will call.

alan reed cars
Used cars wanted for cash
Top prices paid. HP settled.
Buyer could call.
**01562 711083 /
07831 245313**

10
Personals

Personal

ATTRACTIVE lonely Female
seeking broadminded males within
a 20 mile radius. 01902 489 181.

9
Local
Information

Public Notices

**LEGAL / PUBLIC
NOTICES**

For convenience you may fax
any advertising requirements to

**Marie Hogg on
01902 713146
or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk**

(remember to include a
name/contact number for
confirmation of receipt)

You should
be able
to trust the
ads you see.

If an ad is wrong,
the ASA is here to put it right.

ASA.org.uk



FreeAds

**IT'S FREE
IT'S EASY**

*Advertise any item **FREE** up to the value of **£250**, simply fill out the
details below or book online at bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

ADVERT DETAILS - (ONE WORD PER BOX, 12 WORDS IN TOTAL)

ADVERT 1			
ADVERT 2			
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Inside the so far concept car, is this futuristic cabin

Kia Niro EV is leading firm's electric car charge

By James Baggott

Kia has unveiled an electric Niro SUV and promises it'll have a range of 238 miles when it arrives early in 2019.

Currently dubbed a "concept", the car showcases the brand's new electric vehicle technology and spearheads a charge by the Korean manufacturer to bring a whole range of electrified cars to the roads.

At the CES Show in Las Vegas, Kia said it will offer 16 electrified vehicles – including hybrids, EV and fuel cell EVs – by 2025.

An executive also let slip that the refreshed Sportage, due to arrive in the summer, will be the first to offer a hybrid option.

Although billed as a concept, the Niro EV will be launched to the press later this year and go on sale in early 2019. It is fitted with a 201bhp electric powertrain with power coming from a 64kWh lithium-polymer battery pack.

The range of 238 miles could also be extended to 300 miles, hinted execs. The new Nissan Leaf, by comparison, has a range of 235 miles.

The Niro show car is fitted with an Active Pedestrian Warning System which alerts drivers to pedestrians or cyclists crossing in front of the car.



Looks are a departure from the existing Niro

While the looks on the outside are a departure from the existing Niro, much is likely to make it across to the production car. Inside, though, some of the clever tech might not get the green light.

A Human Machine Interface for the infotainment and heating lets drivers control it by swiping a touchpad area on the steering wheel, while the car can understand voice recognition and, if it does not identify the driver, can shut down key functions.

Kia executives also hinted at a new longer-range electric Soul arriving soon, and said the next Cee'd – due in the summer – will have hybrid and electric options, as will the baby Stonic too.

A spokesman for Kia UK said: "Kia is aiming to be a leader in electric vehicle technology and will have 16 electrified models in the range by 2025, many of which will be arriving very soon indeed."

Kia also showcased a world first in-vehicle 5G connection at the show with a real-time connection between Las Vegas and the firm's head office in Seoul, South Korea.

The connection enables users to stream data-heavy content to the car's infotainment system and is likely to be rolled out on future models.



There is lots of clever tech inside the Niro

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Wayne Thomas with some of the children enrolled on his Ace Academy sessions



Thomas puts children through their paces



Martin O'Connor will lead the Ace Academy experience course



Youngsters at Ace Academy enjoy the coaching sessions



Sessions are run at venues across Walsall

Former Saddler nurtures Ace new football talent

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joseph Masi

"We now have lots of different age categories and that really helps the players develop."

A FOOTBALL academy launched by ex-Walsall midfielder Wayne Thomas is inviting youngsters to lace up their boots to kick off the new year.

Ace Academy runs coaching sessions for youngsters aged between two-and-a-half and 11 at various locations across Walsall.

Launched two years ago, 120 young footballers currently attend each week where they enjoy taking part in technical training sessions as well as playing games.

Children between the ages of two-and-a-half and four can receive a social introduction to football by joining Mini-Aces.

Youngsters aged from five to seven are invited to play with the Little Aces while juniors aged seven plus can team up with the Ace Academy.

Delighted

Alongside the coaching sessions, Ace Academy also runs futsal groups for children aged between seven and 14 while next season they expect to have seven teams playing grassroots football in the Walsall Junior Youth League.

And Thomas, aged 39, he is delighted with how the academy is progressing.

"I launched Ace Academy back in 2016 to try and bridge the gap between grassroots football and academy football," said the former Saddler, who played 18 games for the club over a four-year period.

"Since then it's grown a lot quicker than I expected



Midfielder Wayne Thomas as a Walsall player

and we now run nine different sessions each week for children of all different ages.

"The aim is to try and cater for everyone," Thomas added. "Children aged from two-and-a-half can join the Mini-Aces which is full of fun games and gives them an introduction into football. But it's more a social thing for them.

"The majority of our kids enrol on an Ace Academy experience course which sees them attend a training session once a week. They then play games against professional academies.

"We have just agreed that former Walsall midfielder Martin O'Connor, who is a UEFA A Licence coach, will help head that up in the new year.

"And next season we also plan to extend our grassroots arm.

"We currently have an under-7s team. But we have

plans to have seven teams of different age groups competing in the Walsall Junior Youth League.

"Ace actually stands for attitude, confidence and enjoyment. And that's what it's all about, to give these children a chance to enjoy their football and have fun."

Thomas, who also works as commercial manager at his former club Walsall, revealed he decided to start the academy after his eldest two sons were released from professional clubs.

"I've got four boys and one of them was released aged 12 and the other was released aged eight," he continued.

"I felt there was a lack of quality coaching in the area and I wanted to do something about bridging that gap between grassroots football and academy football.

"Academy football at professional football clubs isn't for everyone. It can come with a lot of pressure, both for the players themselves and for their families.

"And sometimes it might be better for a young footballer to join an academy when they are a little bit older, rather than when they are seven or eight years old.

"Since we started in 2016, we have had five lads leave Ace to join academies at professional clubs. But we have also had a lot of lads turn those clubs down because they are enjoying developing with us."

Develop

Thomas believes one of the big benefits of Ace Academy is the number of youngsters now on board.

"I coach four evenings a week and absolutely love it, as do all the coaches," he added. "What's nice is that we now have lots of different age categories and that really helps the players develop.

"If we have got a three-and-a-half-year-old who technically or physically is developing faster than his peers, we can then put him with the under-fives.

"And it's the same if we have an older player, say a six-year-old, who is a bit shy. He can play with the under-fives to help build his confidence.

"The important thing is they all enjoy it and and all succeed and thankfully we have got the environment to ensure they can."

For more information on Ace Academy and for times and venues of their coaching sessions visit <https://www.facebook.com/footballaceacademy/>

Title bouts added to Gavin fight bill

TWO IBO continental titles will be on the line on the undercard of Frankie Gavin's IBO welterweight world title shot in his home city next month.

Top of the BCB Promotions bill on February 23 at Birmingham's Genting Arena is Gavin against Bethuel Ushona for the IBO Welterweight crown.

Redditch's Andrew Robinson, a former WBO European and British title challenger, takes on Birmingham's Craig Cunningham for the vacant middleweight crown. Meanwhile, former Midlands champion Craig Morris of Ludlow will make the first defence of his strap against Leek's Andy Keates.

Undefeated Wolverhampton bantamweight Kyle Williams challenges Jordan Turner for the Midlands area title.

The undercard also features Birmingham's Matt Sen against Wolverhampton's Joshua Burke at cruiserweight, Tipton light heavyweight Ricky Summers, Birmingham super bantamweight Sean Davis, Birmingham super welterweight Mussab Abubaker, West Bromwich light heavyweight Tom Stokes and Coventry's Dilly Singh.

Laura goes for Muir indoor track success

DOUBLE European Indoor champion and five-time British record holder Laura Muir will compete in the 3000m at the SPAR British Athletics Indoor Championships in Birmingham next month.

Muir, aged 24, will look to claim her first British title over the distance on February 17, having already clinched two titles at 1500m and one at 800m. She will also be looking to secure her spot on the British team for March's IAAF World Indoor Championships at the same Arena Birmingham venue.

Fellow Scots Eilish McColgan and Steph Twell have also accepted their invitations for the event. British Athletics' Major Event Director Cherry Alexander said: "We're delighted to be hosting the SPAR British Athletics Indoor Championships and world trials in Birmingham. With two places up for grabs per event on the British team ahead of the World Indoor Championships competition will be fierce."

The championships are on February 17 and 18 with tickets on sale at www.theticketfactory.com or by calling 0844 3388222.

School lauded for its commitment to sport

A SCHOOL has been praised for its commitment to physical activity with a Youth Sport Trust Silver Quality Mark.

The Quality Mark, awarded to Ormiston Forge Academy Cradley Heath, is an online self-review tool which provides schools with a nationally recognised badge of excellence for the quality of its PE and school sport.

Dawn Benson, leader of the performance faculty, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have been awarded the Silver Quality Mark from the Youth Sport Trust, which recognises our commitment to delivering the best possible sporting experiences for the young people at our school."

The Youth Sport Trust is a national charity that builds a brighter future for young people through the power of sport. Youth Sports Trust chief executive Alison Oliver said: "Congratulations to Ormiston Forge Academy for achieving the Youth Sport Trust Silver Quality Mark."

Students represent the academy in a number of sports and are also representing Sandwell at the Black Country Championships in badminton.



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Shaw fire back to end Yeltz fight

Shaw Lane 3 Halesowen Town 2
HALESOWEN battled hard and went in at the break 2-1 up but were foiled by two goals in five minutes late on.

Third placed Lane took the lead on just five minutes when Spencer Harris was handed a free header and it looked like Halesowen might be in for a torrid afternoon.

But Enoch Ekongo equalised for the Yeltz on 38 minutes after he latched onto to a clever through ball and slipped it past Shaw Lane goalkeeper Eddie Wilczynski.

Four minutes later Jordan Goddard produced a brilliant solo effort when he feinted one way and then put his shot in the opposite corner to give the visitors the lead.

It could have been three on 53 minutes when Kevin Monterio was through on goal but slid the ball wide.

But Halesowen couldn't hold on and Shaw Lane equalised on 73 minutes through Nicky Walker.

And on 77 minutes a corner was not held by Daniel Platt and ended up in the net, the keeper being credited with an own goal.

Yeltz travel to Lancaster City on Saturday for an Evo-Stik fixture, kick off 3pm.

More than £2,000 has so far been pledged to a crowdfunding page in support of the club.

Halesowen Town are looking to raise £30,000 to help buy the club from its current owner and provide a more stable financial future.

As of yesterday (Wednesday), some £2,185 had been donated by supporters of Yeltz and other clubs to the Just Giving page.

Donate at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/halesowentown

Swimmers make use of home advantage

HALESOWEN Swimming Club hosted the first round of the Worcester Winter League hoping home pool advantage would inspire their swimmers and turn around a recent run of poor results.

They proved to be a dominant force on the evening winning nearly half of all races and securing the overall event comfortably.

The team spirit was particularly evident in the relays as Halesowen won six of the eight available.

Event winners were Jasmine Alderson, Sam Bailey, Jacob Bailey, Eve Berrington, Emma Bird, Dermot Cameron, James Cuthbert, Caleb Darby, Alex Denton, Jacob Fellows, James Gaskin, Grace Guy, Olivia Jay, Mark Laing, Ryan Larkin, Kaite Morrice, Emma Osborne, Amber Robbins, Paige Robbins, Holly Simpson, Jack Simpson, Joe South, Faye Whitehead, Ryan Worton.

The final scores were Halesowen 206, Worcester C 177, Warley Wasps 171, Oldbury 163.

School leads way with sporting success

THE new year has kicked off with rewards for sporting prowess at Stourbridge school Old Swinford Hospital.

Year 13 student Charles Hilliard has been invited to compete in the 200m at the British Indoor Athletics Championships next month. The best of British athletes will compete for a place on the national team ahead of the IAAF World Indoor Championships in March.

Hilliard will also compete in the 60m at the Midland Indoor Championships (u-20) and the 400m at English Age Group Championships (u-20) in Sheffield. A member of Halesowen Athletics Club, the 18-year-old has proved his ability many



Adam Finch



Charles Hilliard



Huw Taylor

times over the years and is one of OSH's star athletes. At last year's sports day he broke one of the school's longest standing records in the senior 200m, in a time of 22.166s.

Cricketer Adam Finch is currently represent-

ing England in the under-19 Cricket World Cup in New Zealand. He took 2-10 in victory over Canada, their third Group C win. Adam, aged 17, and from Kingswinford, plays for Worcestershire CC 2nd XI and Himley CC.

On the rugby pitch, former OSH 1st XV captain and Worcester Warriors forward Huw Taylor will join the Dragons next summer on a two-year deal. Huw can play in the second row and back row and impressed the Newport side with consistent performances for Worcester Warriors. The 21-year-old has national honours having played for England at u-17s, u-18s and u-20s level. He is also eligible to play for Wales.

YOUNG GUNS READY TO FIRE

TWO talented teenagers have been snapped up by Cradley Heathens to ride in their National Trophy campaign.

Jason Edwards and Drew Kemp, both aged 15, join big-hitter Adam Roynon as confirmed starters.

Despite preparing for his first full season in the sport, Edwards has already made one guest appearance for Cradley.

He scored six paid seven in the final home meeting of 2017 against Eastbourne, the club he will ride for in this year's National League, and won his first ever race at Monmore Green. Edwards also competed in last year's F.A.S.T Golden Hammer, scoring an impressive ten points.

Kemp, meanwhile is being tipped for big things. He will ride for Mildenhall in the National League and Heathens co-promoter Gary Patchett thanked them for allowing the deal to be done.

"We have a lot of options for the team but we wanted to have one of the talented youngsters at reserve and Drew fits the bill," Patchett said.

Of Edwards, Patchett said: "He's a very talented young rider and one that, had we been able to take a place in the League this season, we'd like to think would've been interested in a team place with the Heathens."

Meanwhile, Birmingham Speedway have appointed Laurence Rogers as their new team manager for 2018. Their campaign will get under way with a two-legged Challenge against Coventry.

The first leg will be on Sunday, March 25 (4pm) at Leicester's Beaumont Park - Coventry's temporary home for the year. Perry Barr will host the return on Wednesday, March 28 (7.30).



Drew Kemp



Edwards

Rondon distraught at leg break



Distraught Baggies player Salomon Rondon is consoled by head coach Alan Pardew

ALBION striker Salomon Rondon was left 'devastated' by James McCarthy's leg break during the Baggies clash at Goodison Park.

Rondon accidentally kicked the Everton player's leg while trying to shoot after McCarthy had tracked back and toe-poked the ball out of the way. McCarthy will be out for the season.

Rondon immediately called for medical assistance and asked the referee to stop play before

breaking down. A distraught Rondon had to be consoled by team-mates and boss Alan Pardew. "I am absolutely devastated," said Rondon.

Meanwhile Albion fans say they were left 'disgusted' that Manchester United neglected to wear black armbands for Cyrille Regis.

United players took part in a minute's applause but did not wear the armbands during their 1-0 victory at Burnley.

Champ Allen in masterful performance

HALESOWEN athletes competed in the Midland Masters Cross country on a very snowy and wet Aldersley course.

Tom Kenderdine claimed bronze in the M45 age group, John Hill bronze in the M65 and Paul Allen is the Midland Masters M70 champion.

The previous week saw Halesowen young athletes competing in the league at Abington.

The under-13 girls finished third with excellent runs from Keriann Huxley in seventh, Grace Nolan in ninth and Amelia Hartshorn in 11th. Lottie Roberts finished an excellent seventh in the under-15 girls and Orla Walker in the under-17 girls finished a credible eighth, while Olivia Stark, 18th, led the under-11 girls team to fifth place.

The under-15 boys finished fifth, the team being led home by Owen Jinks in fourth place, Max Price in 12th, Theo Sims Woodhouse in 20th and James Rolinson in 23rd.

Saturday saw Halesowen athletes competing in the West Midland Schools championships at Warley Woods. Despite the snow some excellent performances by Halesowen athletes saw Lilly Higgins Winning the gold in the Senior Girls race and Sam Mannings winning the bronze in the Junior boys.

This weekend sees all age groups from masters to young athletes competing in the Midland Cross-Country Championships at Woollaton Park, Nottingham.

On oche for darts FA Cup qualifiers

RILEYS Wolverhampton will stage the first of two events this weekend offering places at the PDC's 'FA Cup of darts'.

Rileys are again working alongside the PDC to produce 32 'wildcards' to join 96 of the latter's professionals at the UK Open in Minehead, from March 2-4.

Four will prevail from two tournaments in Broad Street, Wolverhampton, on Saturday and again on February 18.

Enter online 48 hours before at www.rileys.co.uk/tournaments or in Rileys before 5pm tomorrow (Friday). Call 01902 310521.

Entry is £7. Dress code is trousers, shoes and either a shirt or polo shirt.

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